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NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**TAILOR-MADE TERRORISM: THE POTENTIAL
RESURGENCE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF PERSONALIZED
TERRORISM TACTICS AGAINST KEY LEADERS**

by

James A. Maicke

December 2019

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EFFECTIVENESS OF PERSONALIZED TERRORISM TACTICS AGAINST
KEY LEADERS**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

When people hear the word “terrorism,” images of the chaos caused by large, violent attacks and the horrific events of September 11, 2001, usually flood imaginations and captivate attentions. All of these events depict the very real threat of physical violence, death, and destruction perpetrated by terrorists against the masses. These attacks targeting the masses also dominate current strategic policy conversations and academic study. However, the power and utility of more focused and personalized terrorism tactics targeting key influential leaders remain widely unappreciated and undertheorized. If terrorists are constantly adapting and calculating operational risks versus rewards during their selection of tactics and strategy, whom will they choose to target and how? Will they target populations or the key individuals who control these populations? This work highlights the following indicators and observations that could lead to a future rise and resurgence of personalized terrorism tactics against key leaders: increased counterterrorism proficiency in a post-9/11 world, improved technologies/the power of media, and a historical blueprint of previous applications of personalized terrorism tactics. These factors serve as powerful motivators for pragmatic terrorists or terrorist organizations to change their target selections and tactics, but may not influence a radical ideologue.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
A.	DEFINING PERSONALIZED TERRORISM TACTICS	2
B.	STRATEGIC LOGIC BEHIND THE RISE OF PTT	7
1.	Logical Terrorist Adaptations	9
2.	The Risks of Indirectly Targeting the Masses— Overcoming Ideology	10
3.	The Value of Correctly Targeting Key Leaders.....	12
C.	RESEARCH QUESTION.....	13
D.	RESEARCH DESIGN AND SIGNIFICANCE.....	14
II.	COUNTER-TERRORISM PROFICIENCY IN A POST-9/11 WORLD	15
A.	CT FOILS TERRORISM PLOTS	17
B.	THE PARADOX OF TARGET HARDENING.....	19
C.	WHY CT PROFICIENCY AND TARGET HARDENING COULD FORCE TERRORISTS TO CHANGE THEIR TACTICS.....	21
III.	ENABLING TECHNOLOGIES AND THE POWER OF MEDIA	23
A.	TECHNOLOGIES AND TACTICS AVAILABLE.....	25
1.	Hacking and Sextortion.....	25
2.	Artificial Intelligence	28
B.	THE REALITY OF FICTION	29
1.	Fictional Case Study #1: <i>Black Mirror</i>	30
2.	How Is This an Example of PTT?	31
3.	Fictional Case Study #2: <i>The West Wing</i>	32
4.	How Is This an Example of PTT?	33
C.	WHY TECHNOLOGY AND MEDIA COULD ENABLE A RISE IN PTT	34
IV.	A HISTORICAL BLUEPRINT FOR PTT.....	35
A.	THE RIGHT TACTICS AND RIGHT TARGET: THE DUARTE KIDNAPPING	36
B.	EUROPEAN TERRORISM OF THE 1970s: MARXIST GROUPS AND FIGHTING FOR INDEPENDENCE	39
1.	Right Tactics and Wrong Targets: Moro and Schleyer	40
2.	Wrong Tactics and Right Target: Lord Mountbatten	43
C.	CONTEMPORARY PTT: ISLAMIC TERRORISM	47
1.	Taliban Night Letters and the Threat of Violence.....	47

2.	The Handling of Tribal Dynamics: ISIS Style	50
D.	HISTORICAL CONCLUSIONS	52
V.	RECOMMENDATIONS AND FINDINGS	53
A.	COMBATING PTT	53
1.	Protect Key Leaders	53
2.	Make the Situation Less Personal	54
B.	RESEARCH FINDINGS.....	55
	LIST OF REFERENCES	57
	INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST	65

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	Example Flow Chart of PTT	7
Figure 2.	Foiled and Executed Terrorists Plots (Against the U.S. 1995–2012)	18

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

COIN	Counterinsurgency
CT	Counter-terrorism
FMLN	Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front
IED	Improvised Explosive Devise
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IS	Islamic State
ISIS	Islamic State Iraq and Syria
JSOC	Joint Special Operations Command
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NSCT	National Strategy for Counter-terrorism
PM	Prime Minister
PTT	Personalized Terrorism Tactics
RAF	Red Army Faction
USSOCOM	United States Special Operations Command

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I. INTRODUCTION

Imagine you are a leader of a nation or a large international organization. As a key personality and leader, you hold the ability to change policies, make critical decisions, and your daily behaviors effect millions of third party actors. Now imagine while holding this position of influence, you become a victim of terrorism. You are not injured or killed during any terrorist attack, but the wellbeing of something valuable in your life is now under direct personal threat. Possibly the fate of a kidnapped loved one is at stake, or terrorists have hacked into your personal mobile device and now have control of some embarrassing information they are threatening to distribute if their demands are not met. Maybe you have just received a threatening form of credible correspondence, demanding that you change your ways or execute requested actions. Your family members, your reputation, your relationships, your finances, and your political power could be under attack. You quickly realize that the actions you take, or not take in this pressurized moment will have a lasting effect upon your own life, but also for anyone or anything that falls within your sphere of influence. These scenarios commonly appear as plotlines in movies and TV shows, but now thanks to successful counterterrorism (CT) efforts and enabling technologies they could become more popular terrorist tactics. In these cases, the terrorists have taken the initiative, control the situation, and have gained a marked advantage they have never previously enjoyed. You are now a victim of personalized terrorism tactics (PTT).

Predicting future waves and trends in global terrorism is no easy task, but its practice proves essential in providing any chance of success in combating the various threats that emerge in modern day society. With terrorism, the stakes are too high to exclude any feasible predictions. From academics to military strategists, and upwards to national level leaders, all parties involved continue to struggle to foresee when and how the next terrorist event will unfold. Nations and whole societies often find themselves caught off-guard and falling victim to the shock that new forms of terrorism cause. This thesis aims to explain the strategic logic and indicators behind future terrorists choosing to employ more personalized tactics direct towards influential targets to achieve their objectives. This work explains the continuous existence and highlights the potential

resurgence of PTT tailored down specifically to individual audiences and targets, who hold the sole ability to give terrorists what they want. Instead of targeting and influencing masses of people, terrorists may only need to exert pressure towards one key individual.

The increased presence of more PTT in the future could stem from indicators throughout the current operational environment and hold historical precedence. These predictions of terrorism's future trends derive specifically from an increased CT proficiency in a post-9/11 world, enabling technological advances / mass media available to terrorists, and a historical blueprint of previous applications of personalized terrorism tactics. These indicators and catalysts create the foundation for a potential increase in PTT. Our first step is to understand the definition of PTT in this context, its potential for increased use, and its overall effectiveness as a terrorism strategy.

A. DEFINING PERSONALIZED TERRORISM TACTICS

For this research, PTT are defined as “the use of force, threats, or coercion by a terrorist or terrorist organization directly against an individual or a valued aspect of that influential target’s life. When employed successfully, these tactics and fear effectively exploit a target and force them to change their behaviors and/or policies they control, or capitulate to demands under the stress and pressure of perceived consequences.” These consequences could range from the simple capitulation to specific terrorist demands, to the overarching degradation of governments, and they could vary based upon the capabilities and desires of terrorists. PTT often appear in the following terrorist’s actions: kidnapping for ransom, hostage taking, intimidation, blackmail, extortion, or direct assassinations.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s (NATO) definition of terrorism as, “the unlawful use or threatened use of force or violence, instilling fear and terror, against individuals or property in an attempt to coerce or intimidate governments or societies, or to gain control over a population, to achieve political, religious or ideological objectives”¹

¹ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *NATO Glossary of Terms and Definitions (English and French)*, AAP-06 (Brussels: North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2018), 124, https://standard.di.mod.bg/pls/mstd/MSTD.blob_upload_download_routines.download_blob?p_id=281&p_table_name=d_ref_documents&p_file_name_column_name=file_name&p_mime_type_column_name=mime_type&p_blob_column_name=contents&p_app_id=600.

is one of the most complete definitions available. NATO's definition results from the overall agreement of 29 nations, all of whom are committed (in varying degrees) to combating international terrorism. This definition serves as an adequate baseline, but applies mainly to conventional wisdom and focuses mainly on the protection of whole societies.

PTT anchor their power in distinct coercive actions and individualized fear, explained best in the portions of NATO's definition referencing the "threatened use of force or violence, instilling fear and terror"² The effects of PTT are often intangible. Calculating the amount of fear, coercion, and pressure an individual target of PTT experiences during a given situation proves to be quite difficult and analytically subjective. However, these elements of human emotion and interaction have always existed. Terrorists and other nefarious actors seeking to gain a marked advantage during a conflict have always exploited these applications of fear. They are merely difficult to visualize, situationally dependent, and create different effects upon individual targets; and therefore become underappreciated.

Terrorism usually hinges on kinetic and violent actions directed towards large audiences. These acts of violence are tangible and simple to measure following a dramatic terrorist event. This perception points to the over emphasis and focus on kinetic terrorist tactics among national security experts, and the lack of study into more singular and personalized methods within academia. Today, the psychological strength of non-kinetic terrorist tactics and the substantial effects they can cause on a specific target often go unnoticed in favor of analyzing large-scale or generalized events. Characterized by so much more than just physical acts, terrorism relies on the successful projection of credible fear. Fear is an emotion that varies in severity between individuals, but nonetheless exists and proves to be a quite powerful instrument of persuasion. Charles Darwin discussed the debilitating effects fear inflicts upon humans in his work *The Expression and Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872), in which the effects would often culminate in a failure of mental

² North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

ability and agility.³ Terrorists intend for their tactics to create this debilitating effect upon their intended targets. They wish to gain control of the situation, and seek advantage. Targeting people's fear—whether through direct acts of terrorism or the threat of terrorism may not be immediately apparent, but over time could have severe consequences.⁴ The effects of fear and anxiety are different for everyone. It is important to understand that terrorism is a form of psychological warfare, in which terrorists seek to illicit irrational responses and create profound emotional impacts upon its targets.⁵

Terrorists can either exert force in a direct or an indirect manner against their intended targets. Terrorism tactics can possess either of these two polarizing and often symbiotic approaches, but terrorism's success hinges upon the expert application of both at varying times. Direct terrorist tactics would be the employment of any of the previously mentioned tactics against a specific key leader, rather than the execution of a car bomb attack in a local marketplace for example, or an armed assault upon a public venue. The transfer of force and pressure during the projection of PTT is direct, and with no intermediary. A proxy actor or state sponsor at times may be involved, but the transfer of force itself remains dyadic, often originating from the terrorist or terrorist group, and propelled directly towards a target for a desired immediate effect.

Adversely, the application of terrorism against entire populations or groups indirectly, and in a less personalized manner, attempts to influence key leaders and governments from afar. This approach lacks any intimate and emotional connective tissue between the victims of a terrorist act, and the decision makers forced to react. A terrorist detonating a suicide vest in a crowded marketplace, resulting in the deaths of dozens of

³ Samuel Justin Sinclair and Daniel Antonius, *The Psychology of Terrorism Fears* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 153. Also see Charles Darwin and Phillip Prodger, *The Expressions of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 239, 322, <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=TFRtLZSHMcYC&oi=fnd&pg=PR9&dq=the+expressions+of+emotions+in+man+and+animals&ots=Y3lvmp0oQa&sig=y1NzvGvqJkwPj0BS0HFRk1LVRCM#v=onepage&q=the%20expressions%20of%20emotions%20in%20man%20and%20animals&f=false>.

⁴ Sinclair and Antonius, *The Psychology of Terrorism Fears*, 155.

⁵ Bruce Hoffman "The Emergence of the New Terrorism," in *The New Terrorism: Anatomy, Trends and Counter-Strategies*, ed. Tan, Andrew and Ramakrishna, Kumar (Singapore: Eastern University Press, 2002), 45.

people, may have a very direct effect on numerous families and businesses; the action lacks immediate, intimate, and emotional value directly to a key leader. A good leader will of course be motivated to prevent such an attack from happening again, but they will handle the situation much differently than if the attack affected them directly. This indirect approach is also a strategic gamble, which has a long history of being “coercively ineffective.”⁶ By attacking the masses, terrorists run the risk of killing innocents and those not even involved in the conflict at hand. Terrorists may accept these risks and consequences based upon their ideological rationales for action, but this approach still runs the risk of alienating the masses more than converting them to a terrorist’s cause. In Max Abrahm’s 2006 “study of 28 well-known terrorist campaigns, he discovered that terrorist organizations achieved their stated political goals zero percent of the time by attacking civilians.”⁷ Instead of hoping for a desired effect or outcome by attacking large and often innocent groups of people, terrorists could focus force and their tactics directly towards the key leaders and personalities who hold the power to influence change. This approach may not encompass an entire terror campaign, but it may be quite effective in gaining specific goals and obtaining tactical level victories for terrorists.

PTT exerted against key leaders could also differ from indirect tactics against the masses by often exhibiting non-kinetic symptoms; leveraging the fear of physical violence or destruction against a valued aspect of the target’s life that is often unrelated to the immediate conflict at large (see Figure 1). However, terrorist may gain leverage for the successful employment of PTT by first exercising kinetic actions. PTT may only aim to harass, delegitimize or exploit their targets into making desired behavioral changes under duress. Lethality only needs to be understood by the target as a feasible and undesirable outcome. PTT commonly take the form of kidnappings, hostage taking, extortion, and blackmail aimed at pressuring a specific target to meet terrorist’s demands, or change their behaviors. By employing PTT, terrorists attempt to gain control of something of value in

⁶ Max Abrahms, “What Terrorists Really Want: Terrorist Motives and Counterterrorism Strategy,” *International Security*, 32 (Spring 2008), 82–84.

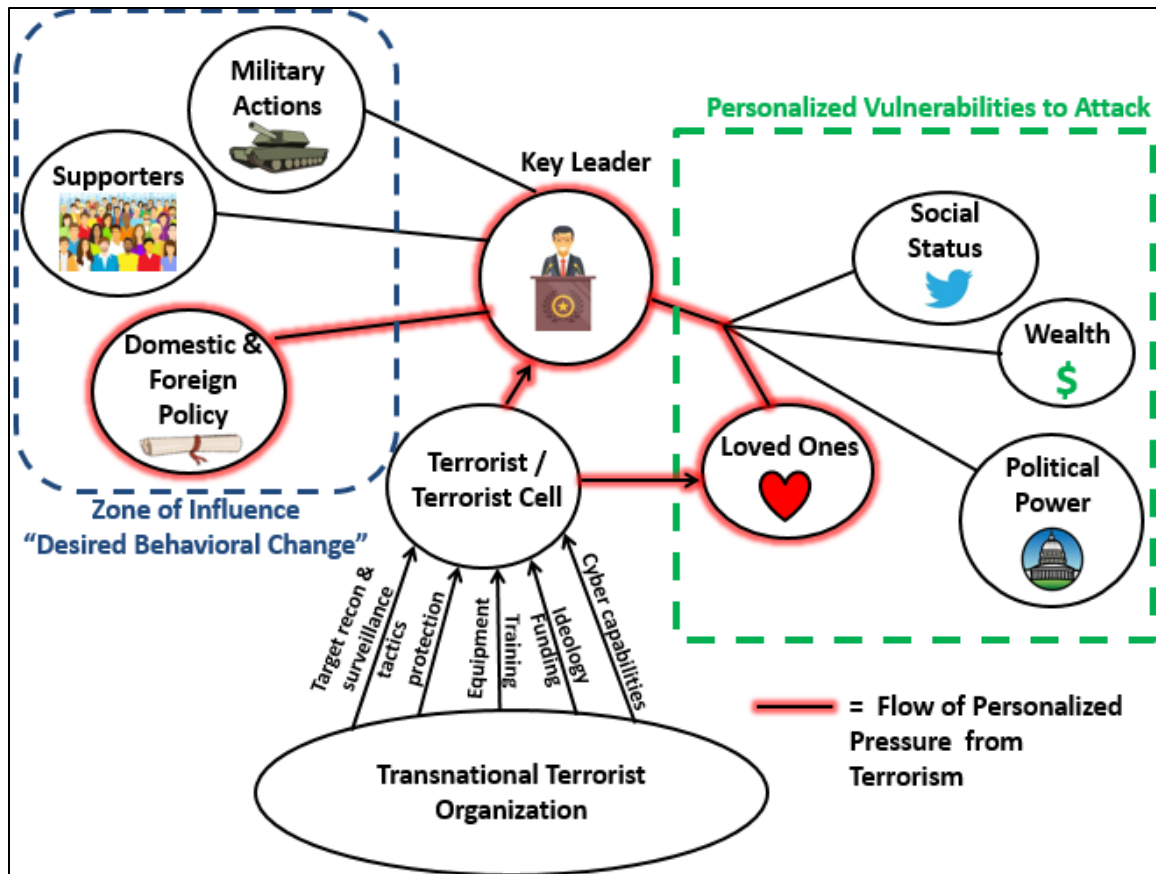
⁷ Abrahms, “What Terrorists Really Want: Terrorist Motives and Counterterrorism Strategy,” 83. Also see Max Abrahms, “Why Terrorism Does Not Work,” *International Security*, 31, no. 2 (2006), 42–78.

their target of influence's life; something they are able to gain control of physically easier than the actual target itself. This instantly creates attention for any terrorist, and provides them a seat at the negotiating table.

The only common denominator for both direct and indirect forms of terrorism are a terrorist's desire to incite fear in their intended target(s). "The psychology of fear is truly the underlying psychology of terrorism itself."⁸ Fear created by terrorism often manifests itself in an anticipatory manner.⁹ This anticipatory fear derives from credible threats made by terrorists holding a position of advantage against their targeted audience; the target fears what could happen if they do not capitulate with terrorists' demands, resulting in the target's decision making and response process being manipulated. Whether terrorists decide to use PTT, opt for an indirect expression of force, or choose a mixture of the two strategies, their objectives remain the same in attempting to influence by instilling credible fear. Which strategy is most cost effective, encompasses the least risk, and drives a terrorist closer to their desired outcomes? All these questions constantly weigh into terrorists' calculations of operational risks versus rewards and assist them in their selection of tactics.

⁸ Sinclair and Antonius, *The Psychology of Terrorism Fears*, 155.

⁹ Rowell L. Huesmann, "Forward," in *The Psychology of Terrorism Fears*, ed. Samuel Justin Sinclair and Daniel Antonius (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), viii – ix.



This diagram depicts an example application of PTT projected upon a national leader of a targeted government (or any key leader) by a terrorist or terrorist organization. By conducting an action against valuable aspects of the target's life, a terrorist is able to influence the targeted key leader directly and inflict desired changes.

Figure 1. Example Flow Chart of PTT

B. STRATEGIC LOGIC BEHIND THE RISE OF PTT

The identification, discussion, and predictions regarding the potential rise of PTT in the future hinges upon the effectiveness of current CT efforts, enabling technologies and media, and past historical uses of PTT. All these factors combined create a strategic logic for a potential rise in PTT. Applying Gordon McCormick's 2003 work, *Terrorist Decision Making*, terrorist could choose to employ PTT based upon both strategic and psychological

theoretical arguments.¹⁰ These theories suggest that terrorists select their tactics through a rational evaluation of their strategic environment and their own individual thought processes.

Opposing theorists and other terrorism experts agree that terrorism is not going to disappear, and that it remains a viable “strategy of struggle”¹¹ Where opinions differ, is with exactly how terrorists will conduct their business, and their selection of tactics. Much of this debate centers on what terrorists want and how do they make decisions. Ariel Merari claims in 1999–2000, “...that the organizational features of terrorism cannot change, and the use of technology in terrorist warfare is limited, partly by the organizational characteristics of this form of struggle and partly by the psychological, social and political context within which terrorists operate.”¹² Due to a terrorist’s need to stay covert and clandestine, Merari believes these factors limit the tactics available to terrorists, pigeonholing them to more kinetic operations such as bombings, armed assaults, and hostage taking, etc.”¹³ Merari, along with Jenkins, and many other supportive opinions that terrorists are uncreative originated prior to September 11, 2001. Conclusions such as Merari’s lack appreciation for terrorist displayed creativity and terrorists’ ability to adapt to adversity based upon changes in their operational environments. They demonstrate a continued wide-range of opinions regarding future terrorist activity, and prove the need for continued debate on the subject. The phenomenon of terrorism and its many forms will no doubt continue. Its waves and trends are subject to the availability of resources and opportunities for both terrorists themselves and their CT opponents, nevertheless, trends and waves still exist.

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 and the Al-Qaeda terrorist attacks upon the U.S. homeland on 9/11 provide striking parallels in both successfully drawing the United States into an armed conflict. Often misinterpreted as an example of strategic surprise, the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks inflicted upon the U.S. serve as an excellent example of

¹⁰ Gordon H. McCormick, “Terrorist Decision Making,” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 6, no. 1 (2003): 473, <https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/pdf/10.1146/annurev.polisci.6.121901.085601>.

¹¹ Ariel Merari, ed., Max Taylor and John Horgan, “Terrorism as a Strategy of Struggle: Past and Future,” *The Future of Terrorism* (Frank Cass Publishers, London (UK) and Portland, OR, 2000), 52–65.

¹² Merari, “Terrorism as a Strategy of Struggle,” 55.

¹³ Merari, “Terrorism as a Strategy of Struggle,” 55.

tactical surprise by an already known terrorist enemy.¹⁴ This is critical to remember going forward, in this discussion of changing terrorist tactics. The U.S. and the wide variety of CT forces across the world understand that terrorism exists, but they struggle to comprehend, predict, or limit the next variation of tactics terrorists will choose to employ. An understanding of terrorism's ability to adapt to adversity, the risks involved in waging an indirect campaign against the masses rather than directly against key leaders, adds additional evidence to this potential strategic thought process.

1. Logical Terrorist Adaptations

As the political, social, and technological world changes, so must the tactics of terrorism. "Terrorism is perhaps best viewed as the archetypal shark in the water. It must constantly move forward to survive and indeed to succeed."¹⁵ Brian Jenkins uses past trends to analyze the future of terrorism.¹⁶ In 1985, Jenkins believed terrorists to be, "unimaginative dullards, content to follow the same script over and over," and their tactics unlikely to change.¹⁷ A prediction that the events of September 11, 2001, today's technological advances, and the continued tactical adaptations terrorist fighters display across the world over the last two decades, have clearly proven false. Terrorists are byproducts of their environments and the resources available to them. Failing to innovate when facing a superior state adversary could prove disastrous for their cause. In the past, terrorism benefited greatly from the inventions and applications of dynamite, the rotary press, and the telegraph.¹⁸ Today's modern innovations include the employment of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), drones, and numerous advantages the internet provides.

Currently, terrorists are adapting to vast tactical and operational CT successes. They continue to work around the physical hardening of potential targets, and struggle to make

¹⁴ Mark M. Lowenthal, *Intelligence: From Secrets to Policy*. (Los Angeles, CA, CQ press, 2015), 3.

¹⁵ Hoffman, "The Emergence of the New Terrorism," in *The New Terrorism: Anatomy, Trends and Counter-Strategies*, ed. Tan, Andrew and Ramakrishna, Kumar, 44.

¹⁶ Brian Michael Jenkins, "Future Trends in International Terrorism," (RAND Paper Series, December 1985), 1–30, <https://www.rand.org/pubs/papers/P7176.html>

¹⁷ Jenkins, "Future Trends in International Terrorism," 17.

¹⁸ McCormick, "Terrorist Decision Making," *Annual Review of Political Science*. 476–477.

themselves less vulnerable to detection, capture, and death when facing CT forces. They understand their “success is dependent on overcoming the defenses and physical security barriers designed to thwart attack.”¹⁹ Along with the availability of new resources and technologies, terrorist must constantly self-evaluate their practices if they ever want to experience operational success. In this learning process, terrorists may begin to realize the futility of attacking the masses, and although risky and complex, opt to direct their attention to the vulnerabilities of key leaders.

Abrahms challenges this assumption of terrorist self-evaluation and logical adaptations, claiming terrorists are “reflexively uncompromising” or choose to engage in terrorism foolishly assuming that it is their only course of action to take for political struggle.²⁰ However, this evaluation only applies to terrorist motivations for action, not their choice of tactics once already dedicated to a terrorism venture. Terrorist failing to learn from their previous experiences and failing to adopt other tactical approaches following 18+ years of September 11, 2001, CT efforts would be counter-productive and outright foolish. Their selection of tactics may derive directly from a need to survive and remain relevant, collecting small victories every so often against the key leaders that are capable of providing them quicker gratification.

2. The Risks of Indirectly Targeting the Masses—Overcoming Ideology

The risk of alienating potential supporters by killing innocent civilians is not the only drawback of a terrorism strategy focused on attacking the masses. Kydd and Walter identify, “provocation as one of five principal strategic logics of costly signaling applied to terrorism campaigns.”²¹ Provocation strategies aim to illicit an indiscriminate violence and CT overreactions to terrorist activity that will hopefully discredit a regime and throw popular support behind a terrorist group. Much like an overreaction by a regime or CT forces, could a terrorist organization execute an act or acts of over-provocation? An example of debilitating

¹⁹ Hoffman, “The Emergence of the New Terrorism,” in *The New Terrorism: Anatomy, Trends and Counter-Strategies*, ed. Tan, Andrew and Ramakrishna, Kumar, 44.

²⁰ Abrahms, “What Terrorists Really Want,” 78–105.

²¹ Andrew H. Kydd and Barbara F. Walter, “The Strategies of Terrorism,” *International Security*, 31, no. 1 (2006): 51.

over-provocation was apparent in the brutal campaign against Iraqi Shia waged by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Zarqawi's lack of target discrimination during his group's execution of violent terrorism broke not only the threshold of violence acceptable to U.S. and Iraqi security forces, but resulted in alienating fellow Muslims, terrorists, and even Al-Qaeda's leader in Bin-Laden himself. Terrorist must be careful not to over-provoke regimes or the people they wish to support them.

Unfortunately, for many terrorists and terrorist groups, their ideologies get in the way of pragmatism.²² Ideologies do provide a foundation and motivation for terrorism, but the selection of targets and tactics is most successful when it is logic based in the strategic environment, rather than purely ideologically driven. A harsh reality remains that many extremist terrorists and terrorist groups' decisions are based upon pure hatred and radical ideology. This may cause them to target the masses (or a specific ethnicity, religious group, or sect) not because it best suits their desired objectives, but because they intrinsically hate them. If leaders of organized terror groups can control the operational actions of its members, the chances of over-provoking and incorrectly applying force can be mitigated. Most PTT directed towards a key leader must be well-planned and provided necessary resources. Often, the employment of PTT requires detailed planning and synchronized lines of effort by terrorists, resulting in the successful direct application of personalized pressure. Targeting the masses with violent terror attacks only produces indirect political pressure towards key leaders instead of demanding immediate results. The value of PTT is that it could result in immediate behavioral changes and desired triggered reactions almost instantaneously in targeted leadership.

Most modern day CT protective measures are in place to protect the masses rather than individuals or what is important to them. A terrorist today may be less capable of sneaking past airport security to hijack a plane, or physically unable to place a bomb at the base of a national monument; but the many diverse aspects of key leader's personal life may be easier to influence than ever before, and are often accessible from afar. There will always

²² Charles JM. Drake, "The Role of Ideology in Terrorists' Target Selection," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 10, no. 2 (1998), 53.

be outliers to this argument. Insane or radical terrorists who utilize hate rather than logical evaluations of their operational environments will always be a threat to consider. However, as professional terrorist (possibly state sponsored) groups and rational lone actor terrorists begin to realize the futility of targeting the masses to advance their political or simply disruptive agendas, we may see a rise in PTT against select key leaders instead. The most recent data provided by the 2018 Global Terrorism Database and Global Terrorism Index shows, “the absolute number, prevalence and lethality of terrorist incidents has decreased significantly around the world since its peak in 2014.”²³ Are terrorists realizing that targeting and inflicting terror upon the masses could be an inefficient and ineffective tactic?

3. The Value of Correctly Targeting Key Leaders

Both terrorists and CT entities understand the importance of key leaders to organizations, nations, and cultures. Terrorists and those who seek to counter terrorists’ activities embrace the strategy of targeting key leaders, “yet the history of leadership targeting provides a mixed record—for every example of effectiveness, there are similar examples of ineffective applications.”²⁴ Failures of leadership targeting by both sides derives from misinterpretations and poor evaluations of just how important or critical those leaders actually are to the groups they represent. “For leadership targeting to be effective, it must at a minimum remove or produce a debilitating effect upon a leader providing either inspirational or operational value.”²⁵ When these metrics are not properly considered or are subject to bias, an incorrect evaluation of a leader’s value to an organization, nation, or society results. U.S. CT intelligence organizations and forces obsess over targeting terrorists leaders. The constant execution of high value target raids, the use of precision guided

²³ Robert Muggah, “Global Terrorism May Be Down but is Still a Threat in 2019 - Are We Ready?” *Small Wars Journal* (2019), <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/global-terrorism-may-be-down-still-threat-2019-are-we-ready>. Also see “2018 Global Terrorism Index – Wall Chart,” Vision of Humanity, 2018, <http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2019/01/GTI2018-A3-poster-wall-chart.pdf>. Also see Institute for Economics & Peace, *Global Terrorism Index 2019: Measuring The Impact Of Terrorism* (Sydney, 2019), <http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2019/11/GTI-2019web.pdf>.

²⁴ Michael Freeman, “A Theory of Terrorist Leadership (and Its Consequences for Leadership Targeting),” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 26, no. 4 (5 February 2014), 1, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2012.751912>.

²⁵ Freeman, “A Theory of Terrorist Leadership (and Its Consequences for Leadership Targeting),” 6.

munitions, and the vast amount of intelligence collection focused on disrupting terrorist leaders display prime examples of this strategy at work. Sometimes leadership targeting is effective at crippling terrorist organizations, and sometimes it is not; but it does apply constant pressure against terrorists and forces them to adopt new strategies to avoid detection and defeat. If executed incorrectly, this strategy only prolongs conflicts, since many terrorist groups are able to replace their removed or disrupted leadership, and continue their operations.

Could contemporary and future terrorists begin to embrace this leadership targeting approach in a slightly different manner? It would be over ambitious to believe a terrorist or terrorist group holds the constant capability to attempt to assassinate, kidnap, or harass a U.S. president; targets such as U.S. presidents are surrounded by vast physical security measures. However, if terrorists decide to take a surgical approach and adopt more selective targeting practices, their probability of operational success may rise and their chances of survivability remain intact. Rather than physically targeting a key leader, they may choose only to psychologically target them. Terrorists could target a valued aspect of a key leader's life that is more vulnerable to exploitation without physically exerting force towards the key leader at all. By gaining control of a valued object in a key leader's life, terrorists gain leverage. These objects of value may be loved ones, a lesser protected member of government, or the reputation and legitimacy of a key societal leader. If terrorists exercise leadership targeting in the future, they must understand three key components in their target selection process; the value of the adversarial key leader to the group or organization they represent, what is valuable to that key leader, and what are my [the terrorist's] actual capabilities to influence or control that object of value. If these factors produce positive answers during a terrorist's mission planning process, key leader targeting could be a viable terrorist option.

C. RESEARCH QUESTION

Will terrorists and terrorist organizations use more personalized terrorism tactics (PTT) against key leaders in the future?

D. RESEARCH DESIGN AND SIGNIFICANCE

The reminder of this work is dedicated to displaying evidence that terrorist and terrorists groups may choose to select more personalized tactical approaches in the future that target key leaders of influence. This thesis will leverage historical research and contemporary examples to support its predictions and conclusions. This study aims to raise awareness regarding the potential future threats of personalized terrorism tactics.

This work highlights that terrorists' tactics are forever changing in response to their adversary's efforts to combat them. Evidence and recommendations outlined in the following four chapters display pragmatic reasons for terrorism's tactical adaptations, and its current need to take on a more personalized approach to remain relevant and provide terrorists with any chance of future operational success. The strategic logic behind a growth and future probability of PTT presents itself in the following manner:

1. The hardening of potential targets and the continued success of CT efforts since 2001 could spark terrorist adaptation to avoid detection and ultimate defeat. CT pressure may force terrorists to opt for PTT more. (Chapter II)
2. Advancements in technology and the power of mass media for both offensive and defensive terrorist tactics facilitates PTT. (Chapter III)
3. PTT were employed in the past, both successfully and unsuccessfully. If terrorists learn from their mistakes or remember their successes, will they attempt to use them again? (Chapter IV)
4. PTT has always existed and will not completely overshadow massive terrorist attacks in the future. It is important to recognize PTT's potential for continued and greater use. Combating PTT requires situational awareness, key leader vulnerability analysis / protection, and organizational support. (Chapter VI)

II. COUNTER-TERRORISM PROFICIENCY IN A POST-9/11 WORLD

Over the last 18 years, there is little doubt the U.S. has established itself as the global leader in all aspects of CT capabilities. The U.S. has a proven record of accomplishment in hunting down and eliminating terrorist leaders, disrupting terrorist operations, and destroying terrorist forces and resources in an expeditionary manner. The most recent notable examples being the U.S. military operations to retake Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) controlled territory in the Middle East, and the targeted killing of ISIS leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi by U.S. special operations forces in 2019. The U.S. possesses the ability to track and strike terrorists with unmanned drones, or deploy its highly trained special operations forces to raid terrorists' safe havens. The U.S. benefits from a well-funded, highly trained, technologically advanced, and well-equipped CT apparatus with global reach. Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the U.S. spent massive amounts of funding, labor, and legislation towards bolstering its abilities to detect, deter, and defeat terrorism.

More than 260 U.S. government organizations were either created or reorganized following the 9/11 attacks, to focus on terrorism-related issues and to enhance information-sharing processes. Additionally, more than 130 pieces of 9/11-related legislation were introduced in U.S. Congress, with 48 bills and resolutions approved and signed into law.²⁶

The most notable legislative CT developments arose in the passing of the 2001 U.S. Patriot Act, the creation of the Department of Homeland Security in 2002, and the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004. All of these reforms enhanced U.S. intelligence and law enforcement capabilities, providing both entities with unprecedented authorities to conduct surveillance, investigate suspicious activity, and disrupt anything linked to terrorist activity. These reforms forced U.S. intelligence agencies to communicate with each other and share information like never before, leveraging each

²⁶ Michael Kaczmarek et al., "US Counter-Terrorism Since 9/11: Trends Under The Trump Administration," Briefing (European Parliament Liaison Office, Washington, DC, May 2018), 2–3 [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/621898/EPRS_BRI\(2018\)621898_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/621898/EPRS_BRI(2018)621898_EN.pdf).

agency's strengths and capabilities. Now U.S. domestic and international intelligence agencies shared a common purpose; find and disrupt terrorist activity inside the homeland and abroad.

The U.S. judicial system also increased its abilities and proficiency to process cases involving terrorism. "Since 9/11, 439 people have been charged with jihadist terrorism or related crimes, or have died before being charged, but were widely reported to have engaged in jihadist criminal activity. In the past two years, the rise of ISIS has brought an unprecedented surge in terrorism cases."²⁷ These statistics only reflect linkages to Islamic terrorism. Hundreds of additional terrorist suspects have been apprehended, and tried as part of other terrorists groups, or as lone actors. Since the 9/11 attacks until December 2019, the U.S. has prosecuted a total 906 suspects on charges related to terrorism activities, with only three suspects being fully acquitted and four having their charges completely dropped.²⁸ Adding even more credibility to the U.S. justice system and the overall U.S. terrorism investigative process, 594 defendants have pled guilty to their charges and 197 were found guilty in court.²⁹ In the majority of these cases, violent acts of terrorism never had a chance to occur, and were most likely prevented by CT interdictions. This displays the proactive and preventative nature of post 9/11 U.S. CT efforts, and the fact that the majority of the total convictions (469) were for individuals providing indirect material support to terrorist groups or activities, rather than executing actual terrorist attacks.³⁰

These numbers attest to the strength of U.S. CT forces and agencies, and their abilities to build a concrete case against those suspected of terrorism activities. The growth of terrorism cases within the U.S. judicial is understandable, considering U.S. law enforcement and intelligence agencies are now, more than they were before 9/11, actively

²⁷ Peter Bergen et al., "Part I. Terrorism Cases: 2001-Today," New America, Constantly Updated Database, <https://www.newamerica.org/in-depth/terrorism-in-america/part-i-overview-terrorism-cases-2001-today/>.

²⁸ L.J. Ruell et al., "Trial and Terror," The Intercept, October 30, 2019, <https://trial-and-terror.theintercept.com/>.

²⁹ Ruell et al., "Trial and Terror."

³⁰ Ruell et al., "Trial and Terror."

hunting for suspects. Additionally, these increased terrorism related arrests and lethal CT operations have resulted in the disruption or complete foiling of terror plots.

A. CT FOILS TERRORISM PLOTS

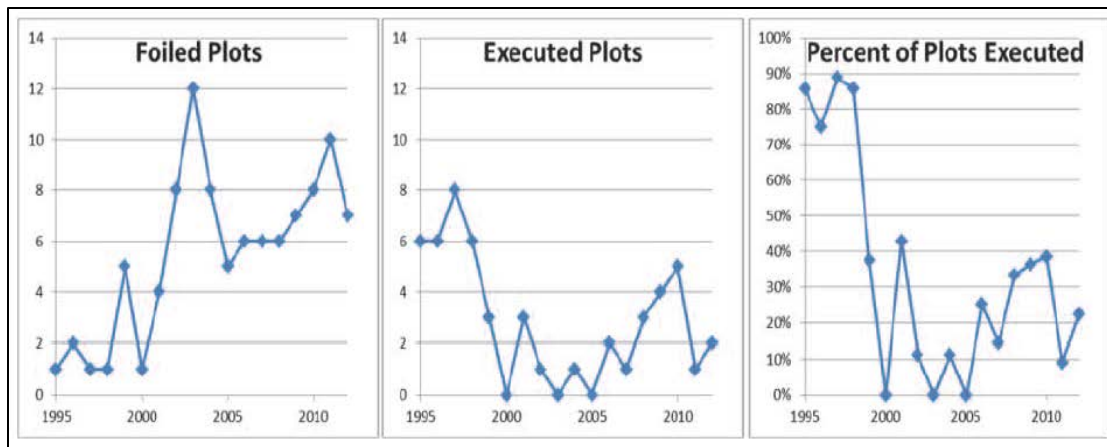
In 2007, The Heritage Foundation became the first and only organization to track thwarted terrorist attacks against the United States. That year, Heritage reported that at least 19 publicly known terrorist attacks against the United States had been foiled since 9/11. Today [2012] that number stands at 50. The fact that the United States has not suffered a large-scale attack since 9/11 speaks to the country's counterterrorism successes.³¹

CT operations and processes, shrouded in secrecy for obvious operational security, do not receive heavy public attention. Often the foiling of terrorists plots and successful interdictions remain unknown. "President Kennedy famously said of the CIA that its successes will be secret and its failures will be trumpeted. In the intelligence business success is transitory and failure is permanent."³² Numbers and estimates of foiled terrorist plots vary because of the numerous categories in which acts of terrorism are divided into, and the lack of publicly accessible information contributes to this analytical confusion and diversity.³³ One conclusion does present itself, in that CT operations and efforts in the post 9/11 era, have drastically increased and resulted in an increase in terrorist plot prevention (see Figure 2). Effective CT measures and security procedures in a post 9/11 world reduces terrorism threats against the masses.

³¹ J.J. Carafano, S. P. Bucci, and J. Zuckerman, "Fifty terror plots foiled since 9/11: The Homegrown Threat and The Long War on Terrorism," *Heritage Foundation Background* 2682, no. 25 (April 2012): 1, http://thf_media.s3.amazonaws.com/2012/pdf/bg2682.pdf.

³² Martin Peterson, "What I Learned in 40 Years of Doing Intelligence Analysis for U.S. Foreign Policymakers," *Center for the Study of Intelligence*, 55, no. 1 (March 29, 2011), <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/vol.-55-no.-1/what-i-learned-in-40-years-of-doing-intelligence-analysis-for-us-foreign-policymakers.html>.

³³ Kevin J. Strom, John S. Hollywood, and Mark Pope, *Terrorist Plots Against the United States: What We Have Really Faced, and How We Might Best Defend Against It* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016), 1–2, https://www.rand.org/pubs/working_papers/WR1113.html.



From 1995- 2001, only 31.9% of plots were foiled. Following the 9/11 attacks, from 2002 through 2012, 80.6% of plots were thwarted prior to reaching execution. On average, the percent of plots reaching execution declined by 3.42 percentage points per year.

Figure 2. Foiled and Executed Terrorists Plots (Against the U.S. 1995–2012)³⁴

The U.S. Department of Defense and all branches of the U.S. military naturally embraced their newfound responsibility of becoming the entity to exert military force against terrorist threats abroad. In the years to follow, over 2.5 million³⁵ (as of 2016) U.S. service men and women would deploy to Iraq and Afghanistan. This number is still growing today with active military operations in both regions and elsewhere. U.S. special operations units such as the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) and U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) have produced some of the most substantial blows to terrorists and their networks. All branches of the U.S. military have impressive tactical and operational records against terrorists, but most notably units such as JSOC and USSOCOM have perfected the art of hunting terrorists and dismantling terrorist networks. These two organizations are comprised of America’s most skilled military units, who for the past 18 years have yielded enormous effects not only in the areas of declared armed conflict (ex. Iraq and Afghanistan) but in other lesser publicized regions terrorists use as sanctuaries.

³⁴ Source: Kevin J. Strom, John S. Hollywood, and Mark Pope, “Terrorist Plots Against the United States: What We Have Really Faced, and How We Might Best Defend Against It,” (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016), 8–9, https://www.rand.org/pubs/working_papers/WR1113.html.

³⁵ Erik W. Goepner, “Measuring the Effectiveness of America’s War on Terror,” *Parameters*, 46, no. 1 (2016): 107, 116, <https://publications.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/3323.pdf>.

President Bush made it abundantly clear on the night of September 11, 2001, that the U.S. “will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts [9/11] and those who harbor them.”³⁶ The U.S. battle against international terrorism has extreme reach; to the deserts of sub Saharan Africa, to the jungles of the Philippines, to drone strike operations in the Northwest Frontier Provinces of Pakistan; U.S. special operations forces conducting CT operations experience little to no limitations. JSOC and USSOCOM along with the targeting provided by a robust U.S. intelligence community, continue to hunt, capture and kill terrorists globally today. The process is effectively streamlined and unilateral. These efforts place constant pressure on terrorist networks and appear to reduce terrorist’s threats towards the masses.

This rejuvenation of U.S. military force projection abroad, and specifically in the name of CT, has made life very difficult, but not impossible for terrorists, both foreign and domestic. It has become far more difficult to attack the masses through terror attacks due to successful CT efforts. However, terrorists continue to adapt to the pressures both U.S. and international CT efforts apply to them on a tactical level, and select paths of least resistance in an effort to project their strategic messages. It may be easier now, more than ever, to protect the masses, leaving individual key leader vulnerabilities more exposed.

B. THE PARADOX OF TARGET HARDENING

Terrorists prefer “softer targets” that are easier to gain access to and effect, versus taking unnecessary operational risks against more secure or “hardened targets.” “Soft targets are easy targets, so terrorists are dedicated to continue attacking these vulnerable entities. While soft targets have typically included hospitals, restaurants, nightclubs, super markets, schools, sports venues, churches, malls, and areas where large numbers of people gather.”³⁷ These targets could also include susceptible individuals.

³⁶ President George W. Bush, “9/11 Address to the Nation,” American Rhetoric (11 September 2001), <https://americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911addresstothetnation.htm>.

³⁷ Richard H. Martin, “Soft Targets Are Easy Terror Targets: Increased Frequency of Attacks, Practical Preparation, and Prevention,” *Forensic Research & Criminology International Journal*, 3, no. 2 (21 November 2016), 273–278, <https://medcraveonline.com/FRCIJ/FRCIJ-03-00087.pdf>.

Has international CT success given rise to these types of soft target attacks?³⁸ The business of physical target hardening presents a vicious cycle and overall paradox. Much like squeezing the “terrorist balloon” during expeditionary and kinetic CT operations, defensively hardening one potential target may push terrorists to another. For example, after 9/11, U.S. embassies drastically increased their physical security measures, making their compounds less appealing to terrorist attack. “Where embassies might once have made attractive options, assailants now tend to attack hotels near embassies.”³⁹ Target hardening of physical locations designed to protect populations creates a potential terrorist response and tactical change to more individualized targets.

There is little argument against the effectiveness of physical security measures and barriers at deterring physical violence or attacks. Physical barriers tend to work against physical threats. An examination of the effectiveness of the Los Angeles County Police Department’s execution of Operation Cul-de-Sac in 1989 to deter gang violence, to the barriers that still stand today in the neighborhoods of Belfast, Northern Ireland and within Israel, prove the benefits of stopping physical violence via fortifications and target hardening.⁴⁰ However, PTT reinforced through limited physical actions, projected via bodiless ideas, messages, and emotional fears can negate these physical protections. Physical barriers may not be capable of containing or protecting against these psychological influences and pressures from afar.

The effective CT practice of hardening physical infrastructure intends to protect the masses from the effects of terrorism, and may overlook the personalized vulnerabilities of individuals. CT entities today are best suited to discover and interdict large-scale terrorist attacks, rather than shielding the emotions and vulnerabilities of numerous individual

³⁸ Frank Figliuzzi, “The Rise of Soft-Target Terror Attacks Is a Symptom of Police Success,” NBC News (2 November 2017), <https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/rise-soft-target-terror-attacks-symptom-police-success-ncna816616>.

³⁹ Martin, “Soft Targets Are Easy Terror Targets: Increased Frequency of Attacks, Practical Preparation, and Prevention,” 274.

⁴⁰ Stephen Gibbs, “Applying the Theory and Techniques of Situational Criminology to Counterinsurgency Operations: Reducing Insurgency Through Situational Prevention” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2010), 25–49, https://calhoun.nps.edu/bitstream/handle/10945/5325/10Jun_Gibbs.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

societal leaders. Physical target hardening of locations is natural response terrorism, and it may reduce large-scale and indiscriminate terror attacks against populations. However, target hardening could push terrorism activities and tactics elsewhere and possibly to more individualized targets of opportunity.

C. WHY CT PROFICIENCY AND TARGET HARDENING COULD FORCE TERRORISTS TO CHANGE THEIR TACTICS

Terrorists continuously learn from failure, and exhibit the ability to learn from their past mistakes. If a terrorist's ideology or their cause remains intact, so does their ability to adapt to adversity in their pursuit to gain desired objectives. Terrorists commonly use regions experiencing armed conflict as "learning laboratories;" testing their tactics, techniques and procedures for future use.⁴¹ Following the tactical defeats groups like ISIS and Al-Qaeda, have absorbed in recent years placed little to no decrease on their groups' strategic visions and tactical adaptations. They continue to share terrorism tactics across the internet, spread terrorist propaganda for recruitment, and disseminate instructions on future courses of action to take to survive. Their ideology and desire to conduct acts of terrorism remains strong despite the substantial tactical and operational victories CT forces have enjoyed. Al-Qaeda, now poised to enter into its fourth decade of existence, benefits from its ability to pass information and successful tactics, techniques, and procedures on to the next generation.⁴² Faced with the overwhelming threat of CT forces' ability to conduct surveillance, aerial detection of their activities, followed by subsequent kinetic strikes and raids; terrorists find themselves at a distinct disadvantage and are in constant search for solutions. If the masses are harder to influence or effect through terror, then targeting key individuals in influential positions of power could be what terrorists turn to more often in the future.

Terrorists have always adapted and evolved in the face of adversity. "For a terrorist or terrorist group to survive and grow stronger, it must adjust its methods to thwart

⁴¹ Colin P. Clarke, "How Terrorist Groups Learn: Implications for al Qaeda," *RAND* (blog), 14 March 2019), <https://www.rand.org/blog/2019/03/how-terrorist-groups-learn-implications-for-al-qaeda.html>.

⁴² Clarke, "How Terrorist Groups Learn: Implications for al Qaeda."

countermeasures and seek to preserve its capabilities.”⁴³ Unfortunately, attacks against the masses will never completely end. Violence against the public will remain an ingredient to international terrorism, no matter how difficult the challenge to do so exists. However, pragmatic terrorists who understand the current difficulties facing their operations, honestly wish to avoid continuous defeat, and conduct a cost-benefit analysis of their actions rather than allowing their ideologies to blind them, may choose to shift their target focus to key individuals. Terrorists have shown solely in their abilities to outlast CT’s tactical and operational efforts alone for years that their means and tactics are indeed calculated, and change due to forceful stimuli within their operational environments. In the face of adversity presented by modern CT responses to terrorism, terrorizing societal key leaders may prove more effective, less costly, and easier for a pragmatic terrorist.

⁴³ Brian A. Jackson et al., “Aptitude for Destruction, Volume 1 & 2,” RAND Corp. (Media Release) (26 April 2005), <https://www.rand.org/news/press/2005/04/26.html>.

III. ENABLING TECHNOLOGIES AND THE POWER OF MEDIA

The growth of the information age, the availability of new technological advancements, and the power of mass media, all enable the employment of PTT and give concern towards its potential rise. “The weapons of terrorism are no longer exclusively guns and bombs; the modern terrorist’s arsenal now includes laptop and desktop computers, CD burners and e-mail accounts, and the Internet and the World Wide Web.”⁴⁴ Terrorist naturally operate from a constant position of disadvantage. “Offsetting this disadvantage requires them to carry out terrorist ‘spectaculars,’ which command the attention of the media and, through the magnification effect of media exposure, generate a political impact that is greater than the investment required to carry out the attacks in the first place.”⁴⁵ The internet and new technologies provide a terrorist or terrorist organization with anonymity, operational security, and physical standoff that they would not benefit from otherwise. All of these aspects promote a terrorist’s physical survival or the survival of their cause. The media then facilitates and illuminates PTT, not by seeking to influence the masses directly, but instead uses the masses to influence an individual target. The media allows immense societal pressures to reach and influence a key leader, and may force them to capitulate to a terrorism demands in an effort to retain their position of power or reputation. These technological capabilities and enabling qualities prove especially useful in the employment of PTT and in a terrorist’s efforts to influence a key leader from afar. Technology and the media provide natural insulation and standoff for a terrorist.

Modern technology and the media enable a terrorist action against a key leader to broadcast out for the masses to not only witness, but to form influential opinions about. Instead of the masses being in danger, the key leader is the only entity under stress or threat, and everyone can watch as the situation develops. To achieve their desired objective, terrorists are constantly searching for, “a technical and tactical edge that will allow them

⁴⁴ Forward by Bruce Hoffman, within: Gabriel Weimann, *Terror on the Internet: The New Arena, the New Challenges* (The United States Institute of Peace Press. 2006), ix.

⁴⁵ McCormick, “Terrorist Decision Making,” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 479.

to create the theatrical kind of event they want.”⁴⁶ Emerging technologies and the help of mass media assist terrorist in these efforts. Even though a target of PTT remains singular and specifically selected, the effects of these types of tactics inflicted upon a key target are widespread and reverberate due to the position the targeted individual maintains in their society. This bonus effect can exacerbate the tense situation facing the target, succeed in delegitimizing the targeted individual, and anyone with an internet connection and motive now possesses the power to do it.

“Part of living in the digital era is understanding that our private information is more vulnerable than ever before.”⁴⁷ The targeting, manipulation, and exploitation of personal information creates provoking emotional responses, and can result in debilitating personalized effects. Exploitive data is readily available to terrorists. Data found online and on multiple personal devices, or obtained via invasive digital hacking provides terrorists with information to leverage. Additionally, should the masses become aware through various forms of media, of a personalized data breach effecting one of their key leaders, their opinions and influence on the matter become a critical factor. In regards to PTT, technology provides for the cultivation of personalized information, media then broadcasts that information. The public is then used as a terrorist’s tool of influence rather than a target of influence. Control of information, an especially personal information not intended for public consumption, equals power. “Information now holds the power to disorganize governance, delude adversaries, and reduce an opponent’s will to resist.”⁴⁸ Societal pressures undoubtedly play into the targeted individual’s decision-making process when confronted with PTT, displaying the power of information. Informational influence

⁴⁶McCormick, “Terrorist Decision Making,” 480.

⁴⁷ “Why Is Cyber Security Important?” *TransUnion (blog)*, October 20, 2017, <https://www.transunion.com/blog/identity-protection/why-is-cyber-security-important>.

⁴⁸ Margarita Jaitner, *Cyber War in Perspective: Russian Aggression against Ukraine*, ed. Kenneth Geers (Tallinn, Estonia: NATO CCD COE Publications, 2015), 89, <https://www.ccdcoe.org/library/publications/cyber-war-in-perspective-russian-aggression-against-ukraine/>.

has, “reached such perfection that it can tackle strategic tasks.”⁴⁹ Terrorists now hold the ability to obtain and weaponize the personal information of a key leader.

A. TECHNOLOGIES AND TACTICS AVAILABLE

Wide varieties of technological and digital tactics are available to terrorists in today’s information age. Designed to simplify and increase the efficiency of communication and execute human daily interactions, these technologies are susceptible to terrorist abuse and exploitation. In the case of PTT employment, individual psychological effects could be far easier to obtain. Without diving into the numerous intricacies regarding specific digital software or various operating systems, we will discuss two technological developments and the tactical advantages they could potentially provide to terrorists. Both developments and tactics display the increased weaponization of personal information, and that the individualization of modern conflict is quickly becoming a reality.⁵⁰

1. Hacking and Sextortion

The first technological development and the generalized tactic of digital hacking, provides a hacker with the ability to hold reputations at ransom. Hackers invasively gain access to a targeted individual’s personal information for some form of exploitation. Often invasive physical or cyber hacking is not necessary, and a targeted individual’s personal information or digital activities may be readily available off social media platforms or open for public consumption on the World Wide Web. “Blackmailing victims using their sexual activity as leverage is a crime as old as time, but this form of sextortion is a uniquely

⁴⁹ Margarita Jaitner, *Cyber War in Perspective: Russian Aggression against Ukraine*, ed. Kenneth Geers, 89. Also see Maj. Gen. (R) Ivan Vorobyev and Col. (R) Valery Kiselyov, “Russian Military Theory: Past and Present,” *Military Thought* (2013), 3 and Sergei G. Checkinov and Sergei A. Bogdanov, ‘Asymmetrical Actions to Maintain Russia’s Military Security.’ *Military Thought* (2010), 1.

⁵⁰ COL. Glen J. Voelz, “The Rise of IWar: Identity, Information, and the Individualization of Modern Warfare,” *U.S. Army War College / Strategic Studies Institute* (16 October 2015), 1–166, <https://publications.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/2361.pdf>.

modern phenomenon insofar as it relies of the use of modern technology in the acquisition of material and the threat of dissemination.”⁵¹

Once a hacker obtains damaging information or access to an individual or a group of individuals, their next steps could take numerous forms. They may seek to extort the captured information for monetary profit, blackmail the target to gain desired objectives or demands; or only aim to delegitimize, embarrass or harass the target while threatening to share their information publicly. This is especially devastating to individuals in the public eye, or key leaders, who value their reputations greatly because of their positions within society, and the influence public opinion has as their source of status. These aspects of a key individual’s life are indirect and periphery in nature, but still valuable to a terrorist and hacker nonetheless. An example of a popular form of digital hacking that could affect anyone, but could be especially crippling to a key personality, is the tactic of “sextortion.” Sextortion is the practice of someone hacking into a targeted individual’s computer or mobile device, and then accessing the camera system or data on that device to actively spy on them, or record them engaging in embarrassing sexual behaviors.⁵² What used to be an aspect of people’s private and personal lives is now violated, and available to a hacker to exploit. Often the “sextortionist” sends an email to their target to inform them that they now possess this embarrassing information about them adding credibility to the situation with distinct details of the information they now possess. They may then demand money sent to them in return for not sharing this gained information with a victim’s family, friends, or the public at large. Hackers often promote the use of more secure and anonymous cryptocurrency platforms during the transfer of digital funds from a victim.⁵³

⁵¹ Katherine Kelley, “New Data on Sextortion: 124 Additional Public Cases.” Lawfare (19 March 2019), <https://www.lawfareblog.com/new-data-sextortion-124-additional-public-cases>.

⁵² NBC News, “Sextortion Scam: Hackers Use Convincing Information to Extort Money,” (3 August 2018), <https://www.nbc12.com/story/38806523/sextortion-scam-hackers-use-convincing-information-to-extort-money..>

⁵³ Adrian Zmudzinski, “Report: \$1.2M Earned Through Bitcoin ‘Sextortion,’ Bomb Threat Scams.” Cointelegraph, August 4, 2019. <https://cointelegraph.com/news/report-12m-earned-through-bitcoin-sextortion-bomb-threat-scams>.

Although categorized as obvious criminal activity, cyber sextortion is a feasible tactic for terrorists to employ. In either of its previously stated forms, intense (real or perceived) personalized pressures are applied against an individual target. Recently, this tactic of sextortion has been used in a “spray and pray attack” style, targeting millions of email accounts and devices in a mass attempt to gain money from its many victims.⁵⁴ The use of botnets and other programs enable hackers to cast a wide net, and collect large amounts of embarrassing data, in the hopes of gaining limited successful returns. However, notable cases effecting public figures do exist, but kept confidential. Amazon CEO and Washington Post owner Jeff Bezos may be the most notable case.⁵⁵ Imagine if the nefarious actors behind Jeff Bezos’ situation were more effective in their operational execution, and able to manipulate the owner of the most powerful E-commerce platform to date, and a national level media outlet.

It is not impossible to imagine lone actor terrorists or terrorist groups with political motivations, utilizing sextortion tactics simply to fund their operations,⁵⁶ or worse, influencing a specific target for a prolonged period. A high profile victim of sextortion may be too embarrassed or vulnerable to combat the threat. The PTT used against them may be too effective for them to resist capitulating to demands made. They may opt to capitulate to their harasser’s demands, change existing policies, disrupt economic markets, or continue to make a string of decisions in favor of their oppressors. They could effectively become a “terrorist’s puppet.” Only a few U.S. states have addressed the issue of sextortion and made it illegal within their own borders, while the U.S. federal government still does not constitute sextortion as an official crime.⁵⁷ Foreign or domestic terrorists could potentially take advantage of these existing legal gaps, and use sextortion tactics against

⁵⁴Zak Doffman, “Warning As Sextortion Attack Targets 200M Email Accounts: Are You On The List?” *Forbes* (5 August 2019), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/zakdoffman/2019/08/05/200m-email-addresses-held-by-sextortion-attackers-is-yours-on-their-list/>.

⁵⁵ Kelley, “New Data on Sextortion: 124 Additional Public Cases.”

⁵⁶ “Sextortion to Blackmail People Is on the Rise - Panda Security,” *Panda Security Mediacenter* (blog), 2 September 2019, <https://www.pandasecurity.com/mediacenter/security/sextortion-phishing-emails/>.

⁵⁷ Kelley, “New Data on Sextortion: 124 Additional Public Cases.”

targeted individuals for political gain, or destabilize the current economic and political order.

2. Artificial Intelligence

The second technological development concerns the growth and spread of artificial intelligence (AI) capabilities. Essentially AI “refers to the simulation of human intelligence in machines that are programmed to think like humans and mimic their actions. The term may also be applied to any machine that exhibits traits associated with a human mind such as learning and problem-solving.”⁵⁸ Regarded most commonly as an enhancement tool for CT targeting and surveillance efforts; AI technology could also provide advantages for terrorists and the projection of PTT. AI holds the ability to manipulate environments and mask reality if programmed to do so. In an effort to delegitimize a key leader, terrorists could use AI software and technologies to impersonate and embarrass these key leaders digitally (public addresses), confusing and potentially influencing the public and the key leader’s base of power in the process.

Non-lethal AI technologies possess the power to influence, manipulate, and fool target audiences. Comedian Jordan Peele demonstrated this deception when he digitally impersonated President Barack Obama in an AI generated video.⁵⁹ Peele sat in front of a camera and spoke, while a computer recorded his speech, and then converted it to a realistic depiction of President Obama saying exactly what Peele was saying in real-time. The AI system programmed to apply specific Obama mannerisms and physical traits, produced a very realistic video of what looks like the actual President of the United States delivering a formal address. The AI system learned how to mimic President Obama through previous data collection and inputs from its programmers. The digitally fabricated president would say anything and do anything Peele did. “While by no means perfect, the expectation is that sooner rather than later, this technology will get to a point where it is indistinguishable

⁵⁸ Jake Frankenfield, “How Artificial Intelligence Works,” Investopedia (13 June 2019), <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/a/artificial-intelligence-ai.asp>.

⁵⁹ Aja Romano, “Jordan Peele’s Simulated Obama PSA Is a Double-Edged Warning against Fake News,” Vox (18 April 2018), <https://www.vox.com/2018/4/18/17252410/jordan-peepe-obama-deepfake-buzzfeed>.

from what the subject is really saying. Other technologies in development not only allow someone to imitate a mouth moving, but the voice itself.”⁶⁰

Jordan Peele’s skit serves as a warning that technology now provides almost anyone with the ability to bend the truth, and project desired messages to a global audience. In regions of the world with singular and limited forms of communication connectivity or internet access, this form of technological terrorism could be devastatingly effective just based on the scarcity of other means of information. With their hands on this type of manipulative technology, terrorists could influence not only populations, but also fabricate singular messages between national leaders and other key societal figures. Along with the assistance of social media and mass media, these fabricated videos and audio clips can spread rapidly, again providing terrorist with the initiative. Having this AI capability and the instrumental power it provides, provides terrorist entities with the ability to partake in international and political affairs. By impersonating or embarrassing targeted key leaders, terrorist now possess the means to make their fictions a reality.

B. THE REALITY OF FICTION

Popular entertainment media often displays how easy terrorism and especially how PTT are executed with the assistance of modern technology. These types of shows, films, and media seek to entertain and inform, but in doing so perpetuate the fear of these events actually happening. They can also romanticize the idea concept of personalize terrorism for potential terrorists. Just as mass media coverage of real world terrorist events produces a symbiotic relationship of viewers for the media and attention for a terrorist’s cause,⁶¹ fictional terrorism plots provided by Hollywood may spread understanding and new fears of terrorist tactics.

Propelling the reality of Hollywood style plotlines coming to life is the current realization that technology once thought to be futuristic and impossible, is now readily

⁶⁰ Colm Gorey, “Watch Jordan Peele Use AI to Make Obama Talk about Fake News,” *Silicon Republic* (18 April 2018), <https://www.siliconrepublic.com/machines/jordan-peepe-ai-obama-fake-news>.

⁶¹ Jay Ogilvy, “TV and Terror: How the Medium Plays Into Terrorist Strategy,” *Stratfor Worldview* (8 November 2017), <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/tv-and-terror-how-medium-plays-terrorist-strategy>.

available. Facial recognition software, “speak-writing,” floating fortresses [naval carrier strike groups], artificial intelligence technology, and mass surveillance systems were all included in George Orwell’s famous fictional novel, 1984; and all of these predictions have come to fruition in various forms.⁶² The two following case studies of the popular TV series *The West Wing* and *Black Mirror*, seek to illuminate the current plausibility and possibilities for the employment of PTT in today’s world. Although many cinematic productions are relatable to the effective applications of PTT, these two TV shows and some of their specific episodes provide excellent examples.

1. Fictional Case Study #1: *Black Mirror*

The first episode of *Black Mirror* titled, “The National Anthem”⁶³ takes place in present day London, and more specifically focuses on the office of the British Prime Minister (PM). The episode starts with the PM and his staff learning the news that the British Royal Princess, Susannah, has been kidnapped and taken hostage. Princess Susannah is internationally adored and the British public is shocked to learn of the kidnapping. They learn of the situation in the same manner as British government; via an online video uploaded to YouTube from an encrypted IP address. The video shows a frightened and restrained Princess Susannah, reading off an unprecedented demand during the hostage video. In order for the British government to guarantee the safe return of the Princess, the terrorist(s) demand that the PM have sexual intercourse with a pig, and the act be broadcasted live on national TV that very afternoon. If the PM fails to meet these demands, the British government attempts any sort of CT interdiction, or the requested act be fabricated in any way; the Princess will be executed.

As the day progresses, conventional news networks begin to cover the story. Social media attention continues to climb with upwards of 18 million views of the ransom video and 10,000 tweets on average produced on the topic every minute. The British public

⁶² Bill Bostock, “‘1984,’ George Orwell’s Classic Dystopian Nightmare Was Published 70 Years Ago. Here Are 5 Eerie Predictions That Came True.” *Insider* (6 June 2019), <https://www.insider.com/george-orwell-1984-what-came-true-2019-5>. Also see George Orwell, *1984*, London, Secker and Warburg (1949).

⁶³ Bathurst, Otto (Director), Charlie Booker (Writer) “The National Anthem,” *Black Mirror*, ep. 1 (Channel 4 (UK) & Netflix, December 4, 2011).

becomes intimately involved in the situation, constantly sharing their opinions on whether or not the PM should conduct the indecent sex act to save their Princess' life. As the deadline for the ransom demands approaches, the PM's personal anxiety increases. The popular opinions of the British and now international public begin to weigh on his decision-making. How he and his staff deal with this issue will be a large part of his future political career, reputation, and personal relationships. On a personal level, the PM's wife is gravely concerned that her husband will in fact have to conduct the requested act, also bringing her direct embarrassment, and soiling their marriage. Her understandably emotional state increases the PM's stress level even more. He assures her that, "It will not come to that..." but his assurances are weak at best as time ticks away. To make matters worse, the PM receives a direct call from the Queen herself. The Queen tells him, "I'm sure YOU will do everything in your power to get the Princess back." This added pressure from the royal monarch makes the matter even more personalized and isolating for the PM.

In the end, the British PM succumbs to the overwhelming pressure facing him and does have sexual intercourse with a pig on live television. The streets of London are empty with millions huddled around televisions to watch the event unfold. An estimated 1.3 billion people tune in globally to watch the act as well. The British government discovers that one lone and deranged terrorist was behind the events, and effectively delegitimized the political leader of a nation in under 24 hours with the help of technology, the media, and personalized tactics.

2. How Is This an Example of PTT?

It takes little explanation to understand that this terrorist's actions in this episode of *Black Mirror* were directly targeting the British Prime Minister, and executed in a hyper-personalized manner. This terrorist did not express any particular political objectives, but he did succeed in harassing, embarrassing, and delegitimizing a key leader within the British government. Imagine if his demands included certain policy changes or political concessions on the part of the British government. The value of Princess Susannah to the masses, the monarchy, and the PM were so great; that it generated a distinct possibility that

any demand within the immediate influence of the British government would be considered or met.

This terrorist selected a national level leader to disgrace and delegitimize in front of an unlimited audience, by gaining advantages through the abduction of an object of personal value. Princess Susannah, like many societal figureheads, processes no direct political authority within the current British government. She is only a young woman with a royal title, who may one day be Queen. However, she is still a beloved and iconic member of society, and her well-being is valued above others. The instrumental power of PTT are once again shown by the lack of kinship between the PM and the Princess. The Princess was not his own daughter. Although not emotionally connected to the Princess through familial bonds, the PM was pressured into regarding her as a personal object of value, because his objects of value suddenly involved her well-being. Whether this terrorist's actions were politically motivated or not, they proved an individual's ability to dismantle central governance with the help of technology. If political demands rather than the production of an embarrassing video were what this terrorist requested, and the PM and government made concessions, far more damage than just the PM's personal life could have resulted.

3. Fictional Case Study #2: *The West Wing*

Three episodes of *The West Wing*, stretching between its fourth and fifth seasons addressed a prime example of PTT against a national leader. During the final episode of season four named, "Twenty Five," President Bartlet's youngest daughter Zoey is kidnapped by terrorists.⁶⁴ The terrorists make two political ransom demands, to the president. They want the removal of U.S. military forces from the Middle East (the fictional nation of Kumar) and the release of their terrorists comrades presently detained. Overcome

⁶⁴ This terrorist situation and the abduction of Zoey Bartlet in, *The West Wing*, traverses four episodes of *The West Wing*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_The_West_Wing_episodes. See: Aaron Sorkin, Directed by Christopher Misiano, "Twenty Five," *The West Wing*, Season 4, Episode 23 / 88 Overall (14 May 2003), John Wells, Directed by Alex Graves, "7A WF 83429,," Season 5, Episode 1 / 89 Overall (24 September 2003), John Wells, Directed by Christopher Misiano, "The Dogs of War," *The West Wing*, Season 5, Episode 2 / 90 Overall (1 October 2003) and Carol Flint and Debora Cahn, Directed by Alex Graves, "Jefferson Lives," *The West Wing*, Season 5, Episode 3 / 91 Overall (8 October 2003).

by the lack of control of the situation and faced with bringing the nation to the brink of war, President Bartlet confides in his chief of staff, saying that the situation at hand is too much for him to handle as both a father, and the President of the United States. He fears he does not have clarity of mind and may act impulsively due to the circumstances facing himself and his family. In an act of selflessness, Bartlet decides to enact the twenty-fifth amendment; temporarily relieving himself from office until the situation arrives at a conclusion.

U.S. CT analysts finally receive information regarding the possible whereabouts of Zoey Bartlet. CT forces proceed to raid the suspected location, killing multiple terrorists and rescuing an only slightly injured Zoey. The situation concludes with President Bartlet resuming the office of the presidency.

4. How Is This an Example of PTT?

Once again, this dramatic and fictional terrorism situation, depicted in a TV show, attempted to inflict pressure upon an influential individual in control of the most powerful nation in the world. Terrorists decided to attack a valuable and softer target of opportunity, but one of great value to an acting U.S. president. By gaining a position of leverage through the successful kidnapping of the president's daughter, the terrorists in this case were then able to make demands from a position of strength they did not previously enjoy. Zoey Bartlet, much like Princess Susannah in the episode of *Black Mirror*, possessed zero political power. However, her safety is of the utmost importance to someone who does yield the ability to change policy, negotiate, and grant desired objectives to terrorist entities. This makes her an excellent personalized target of terrorism. Surprisingly, President Bartlet recognized early this conflict of interest, and did not allow hubris or impulsiveness to overcome his own or the greater national decision-making process. He smartly removed himself from the personalized nature of the terrorist situation realizing the stress he was under, and handing over the crisis to someone not personally effected by the matter. Luckily, Bartlet's strategy worked, and his actions served as a prime example of what to do if confronted with PTT as a key individual.

C. WHY TECHNOLOGY AND MEDIA COULD ENABLE A RISE IN PTT

These two fictional episodes prove entertaining, but also exhibit a clear warning of the effectiveness of PTT when projected against key leaders rather than the masses. Both show the power and capabilities current technologies, media, and personalized targeting effects key leaders. An isolated target like the British PM in *Black Mirror* received little support from his own staff and government to reduce the amount of personalized pressure he was exposed to. Adversely, President Bartlet in *The West Wing* received insulation and support (mainly due to his own recognition of the stress he was experiencing, but also from the organizational support structures defined in the U.S. constitution). In these two cases, terrorists were able to temporarily disrupt governments, expose critical vulnerabilities, and harass key leaders to gain public attention for their purposes. Kidnapping for some kind of ransom or demand was a common denominator in both of these scenarios. In the case of *Black Mirror*, it proved successful and could have been more impactful if specific political demands were made. While the episode of *The West Wing*, displayed the effectiveness of focused CT efforts and humble leadership. The tactic of terrorists kidnapping will show up once again in following historical examples, most notably because it creates such a powerful advantage for terrorists struggling to even the proverbial playing field against well-established state adversaries and leaders. PTT in both of these cases provided terrorists entities with temporary advantages over their adversaries.

IV. A HISTORICAL BLUEPRINT FOR PTT

Referencing historical examples of the effective employment of PTT provides additional strategic rationale for their likely use in the future. If certain IP tactics succeeded in the past, they very well may work again. PTT targeting key leaders traces its origins back to ancient times. The assassinations of key leaders in ancient Rome removed Tiberius Gracchus in 133 BCE, his brother Gaius in 121 BCE and most notably ended the reign of Julius Caesar.⁶⁵ “Decisions in the Roman Senate and other assemblies reached the point that intimidation was responsible for the votes that were cast...Roman leaders were key targets.”⁶⁶ The European anarchist movements of the 19th century also displayed a love for PTT; targeting a German Kaiser, Kings of Spain and Italy, and killing Tsar Alexander II in the hopes of influencing desired political changes.⁶⁷

In these following examples, methods such as kidnapping and coercion are rampant. The IP tactics discussed in these following examples display both successful and unsuccessful applications, and all hinged upon the correct selection of various targets and tactics. Whether or not these previous terrorist operations worked or failed is irrelevant in this historical sense. The fact remains that they were attempted, and utilized personalized tactics to reach their goals. Terrorists can potentially use both the good and the bad lessons from these examples to modify their future approaches for their own situations. The following examples also represent a mix of both kinetic and non-kinetic tactics. However, all these cases share the commonalities of a terrorist or terrorist group trying to incite fear in an individualized target of influence by direct means.

⁶⁵ James M. Lutz and Brenda J. Lutz, “Terrorism in the Ancient World,” in *Terrorism: Origins and Evolution* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2005), 21, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781403978585_3.

⁶⁶ Lutz and Lutz, “Terrorism in the Ancient World,” 21

⁶⁷ Richard Jensen, “Daggers, Rifles and Dynamite: Anarchist Terrorism in Nineteenth Century Europe,” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 16, no. 1 (2004, published online: August 10, 2010), 125, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/0954655049046?casa_token=GN5HsLVebJIAAAAAA:_7dHJbmRjJSZifxmxK80Id6z5a9gvqMGraQMretTMkbsWP2ai3SJzswIz7HiYbwE4MK27_SVocdz-TWp.

A. THE RIGHT TACTICS AND RIGHT TARGET: THE DUARTE KIDNAPPING

The first lesson one learns about kidnappings is that the family goes through unbearable emotion...The emotional strain hinders any calm, clear analysis of what has to be done to resolve the kidnapping.

—President of El Salvador, José Napoleón Duarte⁶⁸

From October 1979 to January 1992, a bloody civil war ravaged the small Central American country of El Salvador. Locked in a stalemate for almost 12 years, the government of El Salvador battled the insurrection of leftist rebels from the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN). Though backed by U.S. financial and military support, the El Salvadorian government struggled to contain or defeat the irregular guerrilla and terrorist threats the FMLN presented. José Napoleón Duarte served as president of El Salvador from June 1984—June 1989 in the middle of the national crisis. On September 10, 1985, President Duarte would learn that armed FMLN gunmen had kidnapped his oldest daughter Ines Guadalupe Duarte and her friend Ana Cecilia Villeda. During the violent assault and subsequent abduction, two bodyguards assigned to protect the 35-year-old Ines were shot and killed.⁶⁹ Ines and Ana would remain in FMLN captivity for 44 days, until Duarte and his government negotiated with the FMLN terrorists for their release.⁷⁰ In exchange for the safe return of Ines, Ana, and the release of 23—25 pro-government mayors, the government would release 22 political prisoners and 96 wounded FMLN guerrilla fighters.⁷¹ Though suspenseful, the exchange went smoothly and the Duarte family reunited with their daughter.

Following the exchange, the FMLN capitalized on the opportunity to use the exchange to their informational benefit. They quickly publicized photos of the president's

⁶⁸ Jose Napoleon Duarte, and Diana Page, *Duarte: My Story* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1986), 245.

⁶⁹ International, United Press, "Duarte's Daughter Abducted," Sun-Sentinel.com (September 1985), <https://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/fl-xpm-1985-09-11-8502070954-story.html>.

⁷⁰ Marlise Simons, "Daughter of Duarte is Released by Rebels in Complex Exchange." *The New York Times* (25 October 1985), <https://www.nytimes.com/1985/10/25/world/daughter-of-duarte-is-released-by-rebels-in-complex-exchange.html>.

⁷¹ These numbers slightly differ between sources, and are presented in this work from reporting by the *New York Times* and *Duarte: My Story*.

daughter fraternizing with her captors and propaganda suggesting the government was now expressing sympathy for the rebel's cause by accommodating their demands.⁷² The negotiations between Duarte's inner circle and FMLN were highly criticized by senior El Salvadorian officials, one of whom stated that, "There is no question that the government loses in this negotiation."⁷³ Extreme conservative critics of Duarte's settlement with the FMLN believed he should have displayed unwavering stubbornness and refused to negotiate with the terrorists at all; treating his daughter as a piece of collateral damage in the conflict, much like the story of Jose Moscardo Ituarte and his captured son during the Spanish civil war of the late 1930s.⁷⁴ Those critical of the exchange would argue that the personal grief and pressure placed upon President Durante by the kidnapping of his daughter would cloud his decision-making, and actually stymie concurrent Salvadorian CT and counter insurgency operations (COIN). The kidnapping disrupted and disoriented Salvadorian military operations, "resulting in the rebels launching their largest military attack of the year, killing 42 Salvadorian military recruits and wounding about 72 others at the army's main training school during the period of negotiations."⁷⁵

The whole episode has been not only a personal trial for Mr. Duarte but also a political test, with a number of senior military officers questioning whether he should have negotiated with the guerrillas. Some officers told reporters they deplored the virtual halt of Government anti-guerrilla operations in the areas where rebels are most active and where the President's daughter might have been held.⁷⁶

Duarte would later defend his actions during the ordeal, giving credit to his decision to detach himself from the situation and form a committee designed to advise him through

⁷² James Lemoyne, "Kidnapping Still Taking a Toll on Duarte," *The New York Times* (16 February 1986), <https://www.nytimes.com/1986/02/16/world/kidnapping-still-taking-a-toll-on-duarte.html>.

⁷³ Simons, "Daughter of Duarte is Released by Rebels in Complex Exchange."

⁷⁴ Duarte, and Page, *Duarte: My Story*, 256–257. See Also: Hugh Thomas. *The Spanish Civil War: Revised and Enlarged Edition* (Harper and Row, 1961), 324.

⁷⁵ Marjorie Miller, "Duarte Daughter Freed in Trade With Rebels : Kidnaped Salvadoran Officials Also Exchanged for Political Prisoners, Wounded Guerrillas," *Los Angeles Times* (25 October 1985), <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1985-10-25-mn-14120-story.html>.

⁷⁶ Miller.

the crisis.⁷⁷ Duarte refused to believe that the negotiated settlement had any adverse effects on the outcomes or events of the civil war, or was in unbalanced favor of the FMLN's interest. Instead, Duarte contests that, "not since the Greeks set out for Troy had so much been asked of an army for the sake of one woman. As much as I loved my daughter, I would never hand El Salvador over to the guerrilla forces."⁷⁸ Duarte only assumed the situation would result in negative political consequences for himself, and was evidently willing to accept those risks.

Only a year following the incident, and still in the midst of leading his nation through a civil war, Duarte explains the tremendous anxiety he felt during his daughter's captivity in his autobiography, *Duarte: My Story*. He identifies the frustration and fear he faced during his daughter's captivity, provided by the PTT used by the FMLN. The FMLN was employing an effective campaign of personalized coercion. Duarte describes the personalized nature of the ordeal by saying, "it is hard to understand that human beings can be like wolves, preying off one another. Even worse, they attack an innocent woman, not me. They want to use our love for our children to wound us."⁷⁹ Three months after the exchange, the New York Times would report that the ordeal had left lasting emotional scars and trauma upon the Duarte family, emphasizing that, "Mr. Duarte's actions during his daughter's captivity at times seemed erratic to many observers."⁸⁰

According to close aides, Duarte became bitter that the rebels kidnapped his daughter after he took the political risk of trying to talk peace with them. The seeming optimism with which the Salvadoran leader originally offered to negotiate and broker a diplomatic solution diminished.⁸¹

Duarte's new narrow-minded and emotionally driven approach to both CT and COIN strategy against the FMLN following the kidnapping of his daughter would continue to protract the conflict.

⁷⁷ Duarte, and Diana Page, *Duarte: My Story*. 245–246.

⁷⁸ Duarte, and Diana Page, *Duarte: My Story*, 250.

⁷⁹ Duarte, and Page, *Duarte: My Story*, 246–247.

⁸⁰ Lemoyne, "Kidnapping Still Taking a Toll on Duarte."

⁸¹ Lemoyne.

In this historic example of PTT, the FMLN acquired a target of personal value to a key national leader, all in an effort to pressure that key leader to commit behavioral changes and shift policy in their favor. The FMLN regained over a hundred captured members that could once again be beneficial to their cause, in exchange for only two women and a handful of local mayors. Most importantly, the FMLN gained legitimacy by delegitimizing their state adversary, and its head of state. They ultimately won the struggle for information in this round of the conflict. The FMLN used this high profile kidnapping to successfully promote and message their cause. By personally harassing the president of El Salvador for 44 days, they displayed their ability to disrupt central governance and proved to the population that their government was incapable of providing adequate security. If Salvadorian security forces could not even protect the president's daughter, what else could they not do? By leveraging the power and credibility of previous violent kinetic acts, the FMLN's threats of hurting Duarte's captured daughter were perceived as a reality to President Duarte. The FMLN took advantage of a destabilized and distracted Salvadorian government, smartly choosing to pressure a vulnerable leader of a war torn country to not only capitulate to their demands in the end, but to treat them as equals at the negotiating table.

B. EUROPEAN TERRORISM OF THE 1970s: MARXIST GROUPS AND FIGHTING FOR INDEPENDENCE

Numerous nations throughout Europe in the 1970s struggled with the threat of terrorism. The decade marked the peak of terrorist activity Western Europe.⁸² A distinct wave of communist ideology fueled many groups like the Red Army Faction (RAF) mainly operating in Germany and France, and the similar leftist Red Brigades in Italy to execute terrorist attacks during their struggles against conservative state opponents. Other groups like IRA rose to prominence in their struggle for independence and the unification of Ireland, targeting British forces and loyalists in Northern Ireland and even projecting some of their most spectacular attacks into England itself. They conducted bombings, assassinations, and other kinetic acts of terror against their adversaries. They displayed a keen appreciation for

⁸² Annalisa Merelli, "Charted: Terror Attacks in Western Europe from the 1970s to Now." Quartz (25 November 2015), <https://qz.com/558597/charted-terror-attacks-in-western-europe-from-the-1970s-to-now/>.

the employment of PTT that targeted influential leaders. Their employment of PTT was not always successful, but it was a popular tactic of choice. These groups often channeled their violence towards targets that they hoped would create a desired emotional rise or response from whomever they were trying to influence. These following brief examples of European terrorist acts of the 1970s display both the operational shortcomings of poorly chosen targets and tactics.

1. Right Tactics and Wrong Targets: Moro and Schleyer

Known for their brutality, the RAF based in East Germany and Red Brigades of Italy both understood the value in kidnapping high value individuals to use as bargaining chips. Leftist groups such as the RAF normally favored attacking individuals rather than the general public.⁸³ Both the RAF and Red Brigades found themselves constantly suppressed and hunted by state security forces. Any slight position of advantage gained could prove useful in achieving strategic and long-term political goals, or merely smaller tactical level victories involving the state capitulating to specific ransom demands that could promote their revolutionary struggle. The governments of Germany and Italy tried to maintain a strict no-negotiation policy with the terrorist groups operating within their borders, fearing the slightest leniency towards them would lead to a slippery slope of continued appeasement. This policy may have proved effective in limiting the immediate effects of terrorism against the state, but would equal disastrous personal consequences for both Aldo Moro and Hans Martin Schleyer, and present lasting controversy.

On September 5, 1977 the RAF executed a well-planned and deadly kidnapping operation against prominent German industrialist Hans Martin Schleyer on the streets of Cologne, West Germany. Heavily armed RAF gunman ambushed Schleyer's vehicle, killing his multiple bodyguards and driver in the process, and capturing the only remaining survivor in Schleyer.⁸⁴

⁸³ Merari, "Terrorism as a Strategy of Struggle," in *The Future of Terrorism*, ed. Taylor, Max and Horgan, John, 58.

⁸⁴ *Headstuff*, "Blood on the Leaves | Ep. 2 | The Abduction of Hanns Martin Schleyer (Review)," *HeadStuff* (blog), 7 January 2017, <https://www.headstuff.org/culture/history/blood-on-the-leaves-ep-2-abducting-hanns-martin-schleyer/>.

For the RAF, Schleyer was the poster child of a despicable capitalist state. He served as president of major industrial associations, and having been a member of the SS during the Second World War, he was viewed as a symbol of the continuity of Nazism in the West German establishment.⁸⁵

Schleyer would remain in RAF captivity for weeks. The RAF demanded the exchange of 11 RAF prisoners in return for Schleyer's freedom.⁸⁶ The German government, headed by Chancellor Helmut Schmidt refused despite public pleas made from Schleyer's family and Schleyer himself. The German government would even deny the wealthy Schleyer family their request to pay the terrorists a suggested 15 million Deutschmarks in personal ransom payment.⁸⁷ The RAF would subsequently execute Schleyer in late October of 1977. Although the German government stuck to its guns, and refused to negotiate with the RAF, the death of Hans Martin Schleyer still leaves a somber impression of guilt and regret today. In a statement made in 2013, after publicly reconciling with the Schleyer family, Schmidt confessed, "Theoretically, we could have taken the RAF's offer."⁸⁸ Schleyer was no doubt a high value target of opportunity for the RAF, but he lacked personalized value to Chancellor Schmidt. Schmidt's decision at the time of the event to stand up to the RAF's demands was easier for him to live with for these reasons.

A few months following the death of Hans Martin Schleyer, on March 16, 1978, leftist Red Brigades kidnapped the former Italian prime minister and statesman Aldo Moro. Moro was a prime target for abduction because of his involvement in brokering a compromise with the Red Brigades that might result in the formulation of a coalition government, an idea unfavorable to both extreme members of the Red Brigades and conservatives within Italian government.⁸⁹ "Despite pleas from his friends, family and Pope

⁸⁵ Headstuff.

⁸⁶ Volker Wagener, "Germany: Terror Casualty Hanns Martin Schleyer - Sacrificed by the State? | DW | 9 May.2017" *Deutsche Welle* (9 May 2017), <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-terror-casualty-hanns-martin-schleyer-sacrificed-by-the-state/a-40340024>.

⁸⁷ Volker, "Germany: Terror Casualty Hanns Martin Schleyer."

⁸⁸ Volker, "Germany: Terror Casualty Hanns Martin Schleyer."

⁸⁹ Finding Dulcinea, "On This Day: Aldo Moro Kidnapped by the Italian Red Brigades," Finding Dulcinea: Library of the Internet (16 March 2012), <http://www.findingdulcinea.com/news/on-this-day/March-April-08/On-this-Day--Aldo-Moro-Kidnapped-by-the-Italian-Red-Brigades.html>.

Paul VI, the Italian government, which had negotiated with the Red Brigades in previous situations, refused to negotiate for Moro.”⁹⁰ As a result, Moro was executed after 55 days of captivity. The lack of diplomacy and effort to save Moro on the part of the Italian government would lead many to believe that his kidnapping and death were a product of governmental conspiracy.⁹¹ Unfortunately, Moro presents another example of a poor target choice for personalized terrorism effects against the Italian state. Not only was he disliked by both the leftist extremists and ultra-conservatives politically, he had no personalized connection to key leaders in authority within the Italian government. Moro, much like Schleyer, was not considered valuable enough to entertain terrorist demands.

The kidnappings of both these high-profile men show examples of unsuccessful attempts to influence and coerce state governments and their leadership. The RAF and Red Brigades incorrectly assumed the German and Italian governments would negotiate for Moro and Schleyer. Schleyer’s captivity never personally conflicted Chancellor Helmut Schmidt. Schleyer and Schmidt were not related, and may have only had a slight professional connection due to their influential careers. These situations lack the emotional weight and intimacy of the previous Duarte situation in El Salvador, where the life of a reigning president’s daughter is uncertain and pending upon the actions of a decision maker. In either the Schleyer or Moro situations, there was no real emotional connection between a decision maker or key leader and the victim of terrorism, and therefore effective personalization of terrorism never fully existed. The RAF and Red Brigade terrorists did not get what they asked for because they attempted to conduct key leader targeting utilizing the incorrect victims.

The results in these cases still resulted in lethal conclusions for the captives, and feelings of prolonged remorse for decision makers. However, in the heat of the moment and with the intentions of limiting terrorist kidnapping attempts in the future, political leaders made decisions that resulted in the deaths of two prominent public figures. Applying a strictly utilitarian process to these European dilemmas, the German and Italian governments seem to have achieved a slight victory; displaying to their terrorist foes that their tactics of

⁹⁰ Finding Dulcinea, “On This Day.”

⁹¹ Finding Dulcinea, “On This Day.”

kidnapping are ineffective and should be discontinued. Regardless of this point, the RAF and Red Brigades still attempted to use a form of direct terrorism against national level leaders. They merely choose the wrong victims to use for leverage against the state.

2. Wrong Tactics and Right Target: Lord Mountbatten

On August 27, 1979, the IRA chose to assassinate Lord Louis Mountbatten while aboard his fishing near his family's holiday estate in Mullaghmore, County Sligo, Ireland. Before Mountbatten and his family set off on their excursion, the IRA planted a bomb in the belly of Mountbatten's vessel, and remotely detonated the explosive from afar while the boat was out to sea. The blast would ultimately kill Mountbatten and three others aboard his boat, including one of Mountbatten's teenage grandsons and a local teenager hired to work for Mountbatten. Three (Mountbatten's daughter, son-in-law, and an additional grandson) would survive the explosion, suffering severe injuries. Mountbatten was 79 at the time of the attack.

"Lord Mountbatten was not just another British citizen who was a victim of an IRA bombing. His status in Britain was that of a beloved 'folk hero.'"⁹² Mountbatten would become the IRA's most "illustrious victim."⁹³ The IRA had chosen a target intimately connected to not only the British crown, but also an individual adored by the British public. Mountbatten in his old age was beginning to enjoy retirement following a life-long career as a British naval officer and statesman. In his later years, Mountbatten had also risen to patriarchal prominence within the British Royal family, providing mentorship and guidance to many of the younger royals who adored him.⁹⁴ By choosing to target Mountbatten, the IRA hoped to shake British governance at its core. Mountbatten was not the prime minister, the king, or a key leader of government later in his old age, but he did hold enormous personal

⁹² Kenneth S. Hahn, *A Case Study: The Effects of the British Army against the Irish Republican Army*, no. AFIT/GSM/LSM/89S-14, Air Force Institution of Tech Wright-Patterson AFB OH School of Systems and Logistics (1989), 44. <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a215632.pdf>

⁹³ Hahn, *A Case Study*, 44.

⁹⁴ Michael S. Rosenwald, "Lord Mountbatten Was Killed By Terrorists. Now He's A Royal Baby's Namesake.," NDTV.com (derived from The Washington Post), April 29, 2018, <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/lord-mountbatten-was-killed-by-terrorists-now-hes-a-royal-babys-namesake-1844482>. Also see Catherine Armetin, "Queen Elizabeth, Prince Philip, Prince Charles Left Devastated When This Incident Happened," International Business Times, March 21, 2019, <https://www.ibtimes.com/queen-elizabeth-prince-philip-prince-charles-left-devastated-when-incident-happened-2777923>.

value within the royal family. He commanded respect and fame through his previous achievements and royal status, but at the time of his death he held little active decision-making within the contemporary world of British foreign policy. Unlike the previous European examples of Moro and Schleyer that occurred around the same time, Mountbatten was a direct target of influence who held intimate connections to key British leaders, all of whom held decision-making power.

The IRA hoped the killing of Mountbatten would accomplish numerous objectives. First, some IRA leadership believed the killing of a prominent British figure via a high-profile attack in the late 1970s would regenerate more support for their cause. Gerry Adams would later state, “In my opinion, the IRA achieved its objective [with the killing of Mountbatten]: people started paying attention to what was happening in Ireland.”⁹⁵ The late 1970s was a difficult time for the IRA. The IRA struggled to prove they were not a dead terrorist organization suffering from organization hardships, effective British CT / COIN measures, and the lasting effects of two ceasefires.⁹⁶ The act of killing Mountbatten and the execution of an additional bombing against a British army unit in Warrentpoint the same day would certainly make the IRA relevant again and serve as a personalized revenge blow against the British. Secondly, the assassination of Mountbatten showed that the IRA was now moving away from its indiscriminate bombings campaigns of the past, which alienated the public; they were now choosing to target symbols of British authority.⁹⁷ In taking this approach, the IRA sought to strike fear in the hearts of the British monarchy and parliament, making them question who could be next on their kill list. Shortly following the death of Mountbatten, the IRA released a public statement acknowledging that revenge for the oppressive manner in which the British treated suspected IRA members also contributed to their target selection, and how the organization now sought to “tear out [Britain’s]

⁹⁵ “Queen Forced to Put aside IRA Murder of Lord Mountbatten to Meet McGuinness,” *The Telegraph* (27 June 2012), <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/queen-elizabeth-II/9359082/Queen-forced-to-put-aside-IRA-murder-of-Lord-Mountbatten-to-meet-McGuinness.html>.

⁹⁶ Peter Taylor, *Brits: The war against the IRA* (Bloomsbury Publishing, London, 2014), 232–233.

⁹⁷ Hahn, A Case Study: The Effects of the British Army against the Irish Republican Army, 45.

sentimental imperialist hearts” with their new style of terrorism.⁹⁸ The IRA would now strike at the personal emotions and fears of key British leaders in their attempt to unify Ireland. The best means to achieve this effect would be by targeting subjects of intimate value in British policymaker’s lives. Mountbatten was the IRA’s first target along this line of effort.

Another benefit the IRA sought through this approach was the application of indirect pressure towards the British electorate. The IRA sought to show that the media cared more for and applied more attention to the life of an aging royal in Mountbatten, rather than it did for the hundreds of deaths of its people during the previous years of the Irish conflict.⁹⁹ Gerry Adams would confirm this notion by saying, “it is unfortunate that anyone has to be killed, but the furor created by Mountbatten’s death showed the hypocritical attitude of the media establishment.”¹⁰⁰ If the IRA could successfully plant seeds of doubt within the British public, driving a wedge between British subjects and their aristocrats, and ultimately force them to second-guess their resolve for Britain’s continued CT and COIN efforts in Ireland, British political leaders may start to realize the futility and political suicide of their publicly disliked policies. This aspect of informational warfare did not always fully favor the IRA. Due to the deaths of children and other family members aboard Mountbatten’s boat that August afternoon, the British public and government became more outraged than fearful.¹⁰¹ Instead of destabilizing British resolve, the IRA solidified it.¹⁰² Even though the IRA seemed to know that members of Mountbatten’s family or other innocents would be present, thanks

⁹⁸“Statement by I.R.A.,” *The New York Times* (31 August 1979), <https://www.nytimes.com/1979/08/31/archives/statement-by-ira.html>.

⁹⁹ The New York Times,

¹⁰⁰ “Queen Forced to Put aside IRA Murder of Lord Mountbatten to Meet McGuinness,” *The Telegraph*.”

¹⁰¹ Hahn, A Case Study: The Effects of the British Army against the Irish Republican Army, 44.

¹⁰² Hahn, 44.

to their previous reconnaissance, it did not seem to stop them from carrying out the attack.¹⁰³ The additional victims of the attack created more adverse consequences rather than benefits for the IRA in the long-term, because they were seen as members of the innocent masses. If the IRA sought to incite a British CT and COIN overreaction following the assassination of Mountbatten in the late 1970s, they certainly achieved that purpose. The IRA most likely hoped that the British government would, in an effort to punish them, overreact and punish the people of Ireland indiscriminately, aiding the IRA in gaining additional public support.¹⁰⁴ British policy towards the IRA for years to come would be marked with harshness and aggression. Margaret Thatcher would forever take a firm stance against the IRA and its terrorism throughout her tenure as Britain's prime minister.¹⁰⁵ "The attack hardened the hearts of many Brits against the IRA and convinced Margaret Thatcher's government to take a hardline stance against the terrorist organization."¹⁰⁶ The high profile assassinations of Lord Mountbatten and others such as parliamentarian, Airey Neave earlier in 1979, may have overstepped British acceptance for personalized terrorism; resulting in greater collective determination, rather than disruption from fear.

In the case of Lord Mountbatten, the IRA did attempt to agitate British governance by employing PTT against key leaders. They hoped for the British government to reconsider the value of continuing its campaign in Ireland, or cause them to execute overactive CT and

¹⁰³ Interview with the mother of Paul Maxwell, Mary Hornsey. Paul Maxwell was a teenage boy who was unrelated to Lord Mountbatten and the British royal family. Paul served as a crewmember for Mountbatten, and was aboard the boat during the IRA bombing attack. His mother claims she received a phone call before the attack from an unknown man asking if Paul was planning on being a ‘boat boy’ for Mountbatten, and strongly suggested that Paul was too young for the job. This may suggest that the IRA was at first reluctant to carry out an attack that would result in collateral human losses, especially the deaths of women and children. However, the attack still occurred. Hans-Rudiger Minow, *Lord Louis Mountbatten, Bloody Monday*, Season 1, Episode 9, Political Assassination: History Forever Changed (Amazon Prime Video, 2017). (see film at: 18:00) https://www.amazon.com/Lord-Louis-Mountbatten-Bloody-Monday/dp/B071RSW6C1/ref=sr_1_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1548792166&sr=8-2&keywords=lord+mountbatten+the+killing+of.

¹⁰⁴ Matthew J. Littleton, *Information Age Terrorism: Toward Cyberterror*. Master's Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School Monterey Ca (1995). 39. <https://calhoun.nps.edu/handle/10945/7469>.

¹⁰⁵ Hugh O’Connell, “6 Key Moments That Defined Margaret Thatcher’s Relationship with Ireland.” *TheJournal.ie* (9 April 2013), <http://www.thejournal.ie/margaret-thatcher-ireland-haughey-north-861575-Apr2013/>.

¹⁰⁶ Editors of, History.com. “Mountbatten Killed by IRA.” *History* (27 July 2019), <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/mountbatten-killed-by-ira>.

COIN mistakes. This attempted application of PTT reinvigorated IRA international relevance, sparked British counteractions, and proved the IRA's capabilities. However, the singular act of killing Mountbatten proved inadequate, and did not place the IRA in a position of strength or advantage going forward. The IRA seems to have selected the right target in this case, but instead of employing a more leverage-gaining tactic like kidnapping, they chose the immediate effects of an assassination. The complete opposite occurred in the previous examples with Moro and Schleyer, where terrorists attempted to use kidnapping, but employed them against incorrect targets. Had the IRA gained possession of Mountbatten and the members of his family, they may have been able to project even more debilitating personalized pressure and stress towards Thatcher and the monarchy. The IRA should have dangled Mountbatten's life as a bargaining chip against their British adversaries. Instead, the British royal family and its government faced the emotion of grief, more so than immediate fear. The worst-case scenario had already occurred and the British government was set on preventing it from happening again to one of their own. Rather than experiencing real-time fear and the personalized pressure of having to consider capitulating to a terrorist's demands to make a situation end, the British royal family and government now held the opportunity to counterattack in revenge. The IRA chose the right target for PTT employment, but played their hand too soon.

C. CONTEMPORARY PTT: ISLAMIC TERRORISM

Islamic terrorist organizations hold a reputation for violence and specular attacks. Their kinetic actions are well documented and covered by global media. However, there remains much less attention of how these groups use PTT to instill fear and submit competing groups and adversaries. The intangible tactics of persuasion used "behind the curtain" and out of the media's eye within the remote valleys of Afghanistan with the Taliban, and in Syria and Iraq with ISIS points to an expert application PTT by these groups. Their effects are difficult to codify, and often go unnoticed, but are still present and inflict significant influence upon the lives of vulnerable people living within these unstable regions.

1. Taliban Night Letters and the Threat of Violence

Following is an example of an intimidating Taliban night letter:

The Americans may stay for five years, they may stay for ten, but eventually they will leave, and when they do, we will come back to this village and kill every family that has collaborated with the Americans or the Karzai government.¹⁰⁷

The Taliban employs an extremely personalized and direct tactic of intimidation through its surgical distribution of *shabnamah* (night letters). Known mainly for exerting influence through brutality and oppression, the Taliban also employs subtle methods of intimidation.¹⁰⁸ These intimidation tactics “have an effect on the psyche of the people.”¹⁰⁹ These leaflets, commonly disseminated secretly during the night to various Taliban targets of persuasion, warn of the wrath their recipients could face should they do not align themselves with Taliban objectives.¹¹⁰ These night letters serve multiple purposes. They effectively counter indigenous collaboration with coalition and Afghan government forces, slow the progression of Westernized educational practices, thwart reconstruction efforts, degrade the mobility of the population, and deny stability for any competing groups.¹¹¹ The Taliban have adopted *shabnamah* as a successful and cost-effective tool of instruction and intimidation.¹¹² These night letter campaigns represent an effective instrument for Taliban strategic communication, especially within the hostile operational environment of Afghanistan.¹¹³

The Taliban learned the successful employment of these intimidating night messages from previous experiences and understanding their own culture. Night letters were a useful tactic of intimidation and influence for the Afghan *mujahedeen* in their fight against the

¹⁰⁷ Thomas H. Johnson et al., *Taliban Narratives: The Use and Power of Stories in the Afghanistan Conflict*, New York, NY, Oxford University Press, 2017), 66–68.

¹⁰⁸ Jon Rabirotff, “Chilling ‘Night Letters’ from Taliban Intimidate Afghans,” *Stars and Stripes* (30 November 2010), <https://www.stripes.com/news/chilling-night-letters-from-taliban-intimidate-afghans-1.127043>.

¹⁰⁹ Rabirotff.

¹¹⁰ Johnson et al., *Taliban Narratives*, 57.

¹¹¹ Johnson et al., *Taliban Narratives*, 55.

¹¹² Johnson et al., *Taliban Narratives*, 55–58. See also Thomas H. Johnston, “The Taliban Insurgency and an Analysis of *Shabnamah* (Night Letters),” *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 18, no. 3 (2007-2009), 320, https://calhoun.nps.edu/bitstream/handle/10945/38802/inc_johnson_taliban_insurgency_2007.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

¹¹³ Johnson et al., *Taliban Narratives*, 58.

Soviet Union.¹¹⁴ These letters have proven effective in Afghanistan with coordinating mass resistance activities and collective solidarity against foreign invaders.¹¹⁵ They also have a deep history and tradition as an effective form of communication throughout the tribal societies found throughout rural Afghanistan.¹¹⁶ Differing from western civilizations, a schoolteacher, a village elder, or even a local police officer could serve in a key leader capacity within the tribal culture of Afghanistan. The Taliban understands and appreciates these aspects of regional history and culture, and therefore relies upon the tactic of distributing night letters to key individuals it wants to influence.

Night letters have proven such effective tools of intimidation that, “many war-weary Afghans seeking political asylum in other nations carry with them the nocturnal missives — real and counterfeit — in an effort to build a compelling case for their refugee application.”¹¹⁷ Weak and vulnerable Afghan provincial and district leaders fall victim to Taliban night letters frequently, making it difficult for coalition forces and the central Afghan government to build loyalty and lasting allies. These threatening personalized letters force these regional leaders to make a critical decision; do they support their government and coalitional efforts that hold limited ability to provide them and their loved ones stability and security, or should they comply with Taliban demands which provide them with short-term rewards and relative safety from direct attacks? Often they choose the second option, and they begin implementing pro-Taliban policies and favoritism within their spheres of influence, all in an effort to protect themselves and their families from perceived harm and harassment. Night letters have become such an effective delivery system of IP terror tactics that a relatively new threat and competitor of the Taliban in Afghanistan, the Islamic State, have also adopted their use. The Islamic state in Khorasan Province’s night letters have begun to target the families of Taliban fighters, threatening them to remove their sons from the ranks

¹¹⁴ Johnson et al., *Taliban Narratives*, 53. See also. Johnston, “The Taliban Insurgency and an Analysis of *Shabnamah* (Night Letters), 320.

¹¹⁵ Johnson et al., “Taliban Narratives,” 53–58.

¹¹⁶ Johnson et al., “Taliban Narratives,” 53–58.

¹¹⁷ AFP, “Desperate Afghans Pin Asylum Hopes on Taliban Threat Letters,” dawn.com (18 September 2015), <http://www.dawn.com/news/1207786>.

of the Taliban and join their cause instead.¹¹⁸ Key leaders within Afghan society must face the personalized intimidation tactics of the Taliban daily.

2. The Handling of Tribal Dynamics: ISIS Style

ISIS in its infancy exhibited a strong appreciation for the tactics of manipulation, intimidation, and coercion when dealing with individuals or groups it sought to influence. ISIS founder, Abu Musab al Zarqawi, forced out of Afghanistan by U.S. forces in 2002, found a new home within the Sunni dominated tribes of Iraq and Syria.¹¹⁹ Any new entity let alone an aspiring terrorist group, arriving to a region historically dominated by deeply rooted tribal dynamics, needs to win over and influence regional tribal leaders to be successful. This process is slow and methodical. From 2002–2006 the Islamic State focused on building rapport and gathering support from the highly influential Sunni tribes throughout the area. However, challenges to the Islamic State’s presumed monopoly on Sunni support soon arose with the start of the pro-U.S. Anbar Awakening (*Sahwa*) movement in Anbar Province, Iraq starting in 2006.¹²⁰ The Islamic State came to realize that it had to formulate a counter strategy if it wanted to survive.

To stabilize the situation and avoid collapse, the leaders of the Islamic State took a step back and analyzed their position carefully. To win, they realized they had to refocus their effort on regaining support from the Sunni community, and these efforts would be at the expense of their war on the occupiers and the government. The key to success would be the ability to redefine the Sunni identity in Iraq in a manner supportive of the Islamic State, and exclusive of its *Sahwa* challengers. By 2010, the Islamic State’s strategy was beginning to see results.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Mohammad Habibzada and Zafar Bamyani., “IS Leaflets Threaten Residents in Restive Afghan Province,” *Voice of America* (10 January 2018), <https://www.voanews.com/extremism-watch/leaflets-threaten-residents-restive-afghan-province>.

¹¹⁹ Craig Whiteside, “Lighting the Path: The Evolution of the Islamic State Media Enterprise (2003-2016),” *The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism - The Hague*, Provided by NPS Digital Achieves (November 2016). 4–5. https://cle.nps.edu/access/content/group/61405992-5b61-4161-a62d-ba745ff5177e/Additional%20Resources/ISISmedia_Whiteside_.pdf.

¹²⁰ Craig Whiteside, “Nine Bullets for the Traitors, One for the Enemy: The Slogans and Strategy behind the Islamic State’s Campaign to Defeat the Sunni Awakening (2006-2017),” *The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism - The Hague* (September 2018), 3–7, <https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/ICCT-Whiteside-Nine-Bullets-For-The-Traitors-September-2018.pdf>.

¹²¹ Whiteside, “Nine Bullets for the Traitors, One for the Enemy,” 4.

The Islamic State in Iraq's counter *Sahwa* strategy was multi-pronged. Its primary objective was to incite fear in anyone contemplating aligning with the *Sahwa*'s cause. An ominous slogan found in published Islamic State doctrine presented a powerful warning to Muslims questioning their loyalties, stating the ratio of "nine bullets for the apostate, and one for the crusader" would be the Islamic State's prioritization of vengeance and force.¹²² Supported by targeted killing and acts of violence, this slogan and strategy struck fear in the minds of influential Sunnis, but also reinforced by less kinetic and persuasive tactics. IS would commonly offer opportunities for existing members of the *Sahwa* to repent for their previous transgressions or use "carrot and stick" incentive tactics to win back lost Sunni tribal allegiances.¹²³ Often instead of targeting an entire tribe, deliberate attempts would be made by IS to carefully separate the tribe from individual members or families.¹²⁴ This approach would place individualized pressure upon impressionable target audiences to choose sides. The Islamic State understood that direct violence towards its regional *Sahwa* enemies would result in limited effects, or alienate potential supporters. It understood the importance of the Sunni tribes to the future survival of its organization and cause. Due to this dynamic, the Islamic State chose to utilize a more holistic and personally manipulative approach to win back its former supporters, and keep others from fighting against its objectives in the future. Additionally, appealing to and manipulating religion is a common IS tactic; designed to administer feelings of guilt and powerful metaphysical fear upon target audiences.

Each time the Islamic State has been physically defeated by superior CT forces and the combination of resistance movements like the *Sahwa*, it has managed to revive itself. It has done so by "going to ground,"(targeting the masses less), siding with tribes on various disputes, bribing tribal leaders, and exerting direct influence towards the individuals it knows it needs to survive.¹²⁵ The Islamic State showed it learned from its previous use of over oppressive and kinetic tactics that resulted in operational failures, and "remedied its mistakes

¹²² Whiteside, "Nine Bullets for the Traitors, One for the Enemy," 17.

¹²³ Whiteside, "Nine Bullets for the Traitors, One for the Enemy," 16–17.

¹²⁴ Whiteside, "Nine Bullets for the Traitors, One for the Enemy," 21–22.

¹²⁵ Whiteside, "Nine Bullets for the Traitors, One for the Enemy," 24.

by enculturating or coopting the tribes.”¹²⁶ The concerns of an Islamic State revival are especially relevant today in light of their most recent defeats. They now lack the ability to project the same amount of force they had in the past against the masses, and could opt to PTT instead against those IS knows it needs to influence and control.

D. HISTORICAL CONCLUSIONS

These historic and contemporary terrorism examples provide justification and utility for the continued employment of PTT. If past terrorists found IP approaches to be strategically logical (regardless of their ultimate failures or successes), they may choose the same approaches again. These examples show that the physical acts of a kidnapping and intimidation display the visible stains of a terrorist act, but the intangible psychological effects that result from these acts are often undertheorized and unappreciated. For the persuasive effects of PTT be successful, a terrorist must select a target of value to a key leader, and set of tactics that allow them to gain a position of leverage—rather than terrorism pressures concluding via premature climax. Future terrorists could reference any of these previous examples to mold their current strategies; learning both good and bad practices in the execution of PTT.

¹²⁶ William McCants and Craig Whiteside. “The Islamic State’s Coming Rural Revival.” *Brookings* (blog) (25 October 2016), <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2016/10/25/the-islamic-states-coming-rural-revival/>.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS AND FINDINGS

A. COMBATING PTT

Appreciating that PTT have always existed throughout the history of terrorism is the first step in combating their effect use in the future. A simple acknowledgement of the vulnerabilities of human emotions and our primal desire to protect what we value most, provides awareness of these ever-present personalized threats. By practicing increased personal situational awareness, and a general appreciation of potential threats aimed towards key individuals, CT entities can mitigated potential PTT through early warning and interdiction. Both institutional level and individual self-awareness to weaknesses assists in creating preventative measures to defeat these direct personalized tactics. We have to remove the possibilities of terrorists or terrorists groups gaining a marked advantage against us by protecting key leaders, objects of value to them, and make PTT less personalized when employed.

1. Protect Key Leaders

In terms of PTT, security efforts should focus on the vulnerable and potentially targeted key individual no matter what environment they are located. Efforts should be made to harden their lives in every respect, same as we do with physical infrastructure and modes of transportation. These efforts should extend to protecting family members of key leaders and now extending to their digital footprints (ex. social media, online bank accounts, and biometrics). Access or control a key leader's physical or intangible objects of value must be limited and monitored. Every key leader is emotionally different. An influential leader may have an extreme love, affection, or place specific importance on one object instead of others. The emotions of fear, embarrassment, and anxiety manifest themselves in different way for different people. These vulnerabilities need to be identified for each influential leader. By identifying these personal vulnerabilities, security professionals and those tasked to protect key leaders, become better prepared to take appropriate actions to protect key leaders and their objects of value.

Most political leaders benefit from extensive security teams and procedures to protect themselves and their families; however, any individual who is influential in society or substantial organizations should consider the same protections. These protective considerations extend to any influential leaders in societies be they, religious leaders, corporate CEOs, or celebrities. If an individual processes the power and influence to effect hundreds or thousands of lives, they should take preventative measures to protect themselves from PTT. Failing to protect valuable aspects of key leader lives gives terrorists an open invitation to attack these indirect targets of opportunity and leverage their value against us.

2. Make the Situation Less Personal

Often a key leader is unaware, aloof, in denial of, or too preoccupied to focus on the personalized terrorism threats they potentially face. This is why supporting casts of staff or advisors serve critical roles in the process of PTT prevention and reaction. There is no substitute for individualized CT planning and terrorism prevention. Measures should be taken to prevent personalized terrorism incidents in general, but also to coordinate adequate responses if they should happen to occur.¹²⁷ Planning and crisis rehearsals can limit the shock personalized terrorism events present. To limit the individualized pressure and fear that these situations create in a targeted individual, we must reduce the amount of personalization.

President Bartlet in the episode of *The West Wing* did this quite well, and was aided by the already emplaced benefits of the U.S. constitution's 25th amendment. He effectively removed himself from the situational decision-making process, opting to fully assume the role of a father and husband, and bestow the duties of president to others not personally connected to the terrorist situation. This strategy seems to work, but only if key leaders disregard their own hubris and allow this process to occur. Supportive staffs and standard operating procedures assist in this process of insulation and isolation. Democracies like the U.S. benefit from constitutional law and established regulations of crisis management,

¹²⁷ Richard Clutterbuck, *Kidnap and Ransom: The Response* (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1978), 76.

while other more autocratic leaders and governments may not have this luxury, and the ability to remove a target from the effects of PTT may be difficult to do. Terrorist want their targets of IP terror tactics to feel alone, distressed, and make poor decisions based purely on their own personal emotions. By removing and providing support to a key leader effected by terrorism pressures until they subside or conclude, we are then able to create a better decision-making environment to deal with the situation. To make the any personalized terrorism situation less personal, key leadership must have collective security to protect every aspect of their lives, organizational support, and pre-planned procedures to combat PTT.

B. RESEARCH FINDINGS

PTT have always existed as a tool for terrorists to use, they are just underappreciated. PTT may experience a rise or slight rejuvenation in the future, but it will not completely replace terrorist acts against the masses any time soon. Terrorism still relies on large-scale shock value, and is commonly fueled by hatred and ideology. The practicality of pressure from CT effectiveness, enabling technologies and media available, and a history of PTT usage in the past / present may force some terrorists to favor PTT. However, terrorists consumed and driven by radical ideology rather than pragmatism will still opt to inflict terror upon the masses. The strategic logic, indicators, and historical examples highlighted in this thesis could indicate that pragmatic terrorists or terrorist organization will adopt more personalized tactics against key leaders, but it will most likely not influence terrorist ideologues. Current data does suggest terrorist attacks and their lethality are in decline, but that may not directly equate to terrorists opting to employ PTT against key leaders instead. The factors identified in his work align with pragmatic decision-making processes that only some terrorists and terrorist organization could choose to use. For the radicalized and strictly ideologically driven terrorist, these indicators may prove irrelevant. For these reasons, it is most important to understand the presence of PTT, their use as a tailorable option in future rationally driven terrorism campaigns, and its effectiveness if employed against the correct targets of critical influence.

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